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ABSTRACT

Noting that academic failure begins early and that the focus of school reform should be at the elementary level, this book describes the Basic School, an idea based on best practice in elementary education. A Basic School pushes school reform back to the first years of formal education; gives priority to language and suggests a coherent core of commonalities; and identifies and implements key components of an effective school in a single institution. The book is organized into four sections. Section 1 describes the school as a community with a clear mission, teachers as leaders, and parents as partners. Section 2 discusses the coherent curriculum of the Basic School, which stresses: (1) the centrality of literacy and language of all kinds, including words, numbers, and the arts; (2) the core commonalities of the various fields of knowledge, which are organized thematically and integrated so that students see connections across the disciplines and relate what they learn to life; and (3) assessment in the service of learning, based on academic standards with benchmarks, which enables the Basic School to be accountable to students, parents, and the larger community. Section 3 describes the school climate for learning, with: (1) small class size, flexible teaching schedules, and various student grouping arrangements; (2) enriching resources for learning, including libraries and use of local zoos, museums, and parks, and electronic tools that connect classrooms to networks of knowledge; and (3) services for children that meet the needs of the whole child by providing basic health and counseling, family referrals, and after-school and summer enrichment programs. Section 4, which describes the Basic School's commitment to character, includes a discussion of seven core virtues and suggests that students should be encouraged to apply the lessons of the classroom to the world around them. A separate section on Technical Notes describes school surveys referred to in the report. Contains 243 notes. (DR)

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THE BASIC SCHOOL

A Community for Learning

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The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

THE BASIC SCHOOL

The Basic School

A COMMUNITY FOR LEARNING

ERNEST L. BOYER

THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

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CONTENTS

TRUSTEES OF THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

PREFACE 1

PROLOGUE: A NEW BEGINNING 9

I THE SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY
Building Community 21
Teachers as Leaders 37
Parents as Partners 53

II A CURRICULUM WITH COHERENCE
The Centrality of Language 71
The Core Commonalities 87
Measuring Results 107

III A CLIMATE FOR LEARNING
Patterns to Fit Purpose 123
Resources to Enrich 141
Services for Children 155

IV A COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER
The Core Virtues 175
Living with Purpose 189

APPENDIX *Technical Notes* 199

NOTES 207

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Preface

This book has been in my mind for a long time. I first proposed the Basic School years ago, in 1979, in an article in *The New York Times*.[1] I suggested then that the twelve years of formal schooling be restructured, with three different schools redefined, each with its own distinctive mission. *The Basic School*, where young children would focus on language and general education, was first. *The Common School*, spanning the middle years, would be devoted exclusively to a core of general knowledge. *The Transition School*, the last two or three years of formal education, would be flexibly arranged, providing students with beginning apprenticeships and collegiate study.

But recently it occurred to me that the Basic School idea really goes back to the 1960s when I was Chancellor of the State University of New York. This was a time of turmoil in America, of anger and divisiveness, and of riots on the campus. Students in those days would say, in frustration, that younger and older people had nothing in common. They challenged the right of the university to require a core of common learning and would ask, "What does it mean to be an educated person, anyway?"

Later, during a sabbatical at Cambridge University in England, with a bit of distance from my own world, I reflected on just what colleges, as well as schools, should teach. "Is there, in

fact, a core of common learning?" "If so, how should it be defined?"

In a very informal way, I started thinking about what it is that all human beings share, asking myself, "What do we all have in common?" "And would it be possible," I wondered, "to organize schools in ways that would relate the curriculum even more directly to students' lives, helping them understand more about who they are and, even more important, who we are as human beings?"

While still in England, I wrote a monograph with Martin Kaplan called *Educating for Survival*, in which we tested, in a very preliminary way, a new approach to education, one in which the curriculum would be organized not on the basis of the disciplines, but around basic human experiences.[2] In the ensuing years, while U.S. Commissioner of Education, I continued to reflect upon this notion of "human commonalities," to add to them, considering how the idea of shared human experiences might somehow be woven into the fabric of formal education, so the disciplines might be used to illuminate larger, more integrative ends.

Fifteen years ago, I joined The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and these questions about how to organize the curriculum remained in my mind and influenced much of my work. Our very first report, in 1980, was an essay called *A Quest for Common Learning*, in which Arthur Levine and I argued that general education at the college level needed to become both more integrated and more consequential. Colleges, we suggested, should stress "those experiences, relationships, and ethical concerns that are common to all of us simply by virtue of our membership in the human family at a particular moment in history."[3]

Then, in 1983, as a new phase of school reform was about to begin, we released *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*. Here, among other recommendations, we called for a curriculum that would "help all students learn about their human heritage, and the interdependent world in which they live, through a core of common learning based upon those consequential experiences common to all people."[4]

In 1986, we returned to higher education with the book *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. Once again, we proposed "a program of general education that introduces students not only to essential knowledge, but also to connections across the disciplines and, in the end, to the application of knowledge to life beyond the campus."[5] We said, "The integrated core concerns itself with the universal experiences that are common to all people, with those shared activities without which human relationships are diminished and the quality of life reduced."[6]

It was during this project that I became increasingly convinced that education is a seamless web, that one level of learning relates to every other, and that the most promising prospects for educational reform are in the elementary school, in the first years of formal learning.

Five years ago, The Carnegie Foundation embarked on a study focusing on the first ten years of life. We looked at prenatal issues, the condition of infants in America, and the needs of preschoolers. In 1991, this study culminated in a report called *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation,* which outlined the steps we must take, as a nation, to get all children ready for school. Specifically, we proposed a seven-step strategy: *a healthy start, empowered parents, quality preschool, a responsive workplace, television that teaches, neighborhoods*

for learning, and *connections across the generations*, "all of the forces that have such a profound impact on children's lives and shape their readiness to learn."[7] We concluded that this agenda is, without question, the right of every child, and that the time has come to create, in this country, a "public love of children."[8]

But if all children are to be ready for school, surely all schools must be ready for the children. For the last few years we have devoted thousands of hours to a study of elementary education. Our investigation led us down many paths. We examined the research, conducted surveys, and visited schools. We invited educators and early childhood experts to the Foundation. We met with Chief State School Officers, who helped us see how the design of the Basic School would fit into the current political framework and state policies. And, above all, we also listened to teachers.

We heard elementary teachers talk about how the lives of children have changed, both for better and worse. Children in privileged homes are likely to be motivated and to use technology's latest innovations, while those from impoverished backgrounds are, educationally, still the most neglected. The challenge is to prepare *all* children for the changing world they will inherit.

What was needed, we felt, was a new vision of elementary education, a comprehensive plan that would make available, to every child, school practices that really work.

It was at this point that my long interest in the curriculum was stirred again. Young children don't think about categories of knowledge. They follow their curiosity wherever it leads. They are, above all, natural, integrative learners. And yet we

found that most schools are unable to put the fragmented pieces of knowledge together, and end up operating without an overall curriculum plan. The elementary school, I concluded, should be organized around a curriculum with coherence.

As we were completing this long journey, I was greatly encouraged, not only by the vitality of the elementary school, but by the dedication of principals and teachers, and most especially by their willingness to change. It seems clear to me that the elementary school is the most flexible level of formal learning, a place where the focus is on *children*, not on "the system" or promoting one's career. And it is my deepest hope that *The Basic School* will be of help to the dedicated principals and teachers who each day serve so selflessly our nation's children.

But I am anxious, too. I am concerned about the loss of confidence in this country not just in school reform, but in the very idea of public education. I'm concerned when the nation's schools are so often referred to as a "failed system." I am troubled, too, that successes go unreported and that blanket condemnation of our schools often goes unchallenged. I see no way for America's future to be secure without quality education that serves *every* child effectively, not just the most advantaged.

What our research and experience have taught us is that the lives of our children and health of the public and private schools they attend transcend political parties, and are more important than any one philosophy. I am convinced that it is possible to find common ground for the sake of our children, and for our survival as well. In the end, this is what the Basic School is about: How can we give *all* children in this country the right start?

As we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, we have an opportunity to bring new energy and a renewed commitment to America's most essential public institution—the elementary school. One hundred and twelve years ago, Sitting Bull, a Lakota Sioux, said: "Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children."[9] Nothing is more important.

ERNEST L. BOYER

President
The Carnegie Foundation for
the Advancement of Teaching

PROLOGUE: A NEW BEGINNING

Prologue: A New Beginning

We propose, in this report, a new place of learning called *The Basic School*. The Basic School is not so much an *institution* as it is an *idea* based on best practice that is, we believe, appropriate for every elementary school. We call this school "basic," first of all, because it takes the push for school reform back to the beginning, to the first years of formal education. It is "basic" because it gives priority to language and suggests a core of knowledge with coherence. Finally, the school we propose is "basic" because it identifies key components of an effective school and brings them all together in a single institution—the Basic School.

Our goal is to improve prospects for learning for every child. Last fall, more than three million kindergarten children[10] enrolled in over fifty thousand public and private elementary schools from Bangor, Maine, to the islands of Hawaii.[11] Most of these young students arrived at school anxious, but also eager. Some were cheerful, others troubled. Some skipped and ran, others could not walk. This new generation of students came from countless neighborhoods, from a great diversity of cultures, speaking more languages than most of us could name. The challenge is to ensure that every child will become a confident, resourceful learner.

Children are, of course, *always* learning. They learn as they touch the earth, feel the grass, dig into the sand. Children,

endlessly responding to the world around them, learn as they chase pigeons in the park, study drifting clouds, and watch ants scurrying across city sidewalks. "The child is," as Ashley Montagu observed, "the most avid learner of all living things on this earth."[12] Yet this marvelous gift of continuous discovery can be diminished or enhanced, and the purpose of the Basic School is to keep the urge to learn alive in every child.

For years, America has been working hard to improve all the nation's schools and enrich learning for all children. As a result, academic standards have been raised, teacher certification requirements have been tightened, and educational innovations have been introduced from coast to coast. Without a doubt, progress has been made—with a decline in school dropouts in some districts as well as modest increases in basic skills performance, especially among minority students.

Today, America's best schools are among the most outstanding in the world. Others are succeeding, often under difficult conditions, with teachers assuming responsibilities that families and communities have not been able to accomplish. But it's also true that far too many of the nation's schools are marginal at best, and that some schools, those in our most troubled neighborhoods, can hardly be called schools, as U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley put it.[13] In one suburban elementary school in Ohio, a fourth-grade teacher told us: "We seem to be working harder, with fewer gains."

When we asked elementary school teachers in a national survey how the quality of American education today compares to five years ago, about 40 percent said "about the same." Thirty-two percent said it's gotten worse. Only 26 percent said it's better.[14] Parents, we discovered, were even more

pessimistic about the progress being made. Twenty percent feel the quality of education is better. Forty percent say it's worse, compared to five years ago[15] (table 1). School success, ultimately, must be measured by student performance, not opinion polls. Still, no one can be fully satisfied with where we are today.

Table 1

How Does the Quality of Education
in the Nation Today Compare With Five Years Ago

(Survey of Teachers and Survey of Parents)

	Better	About the Same	Worse
Teachers	26	42	32
Parents	20	40	40

Source: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

We reach one incontrovertible conclusion. The world has changed and schools must change, too. The lives of children who enroll in school today will span a new century. Those who graduate will enter what Peter F. Drucker calls "the knowledge society,"[16] a society that requires higher literacy, more technical competence, and lifelong learning. Knowledge has, without question, become our most precious resource. And if, in the days ahead, educators cannot help students become literate and well informed, if the coming generation cannot be helped to see well beyond the confines of their own lives, the nation's prospects for the future will be dangerously diminished.

Clearly, the push for school renewal needs a new beginning. This time the focus must be on the early years, on *elementary* education. Every level of learning is important. No sector should be neglected. But school failure starts very early, and if all children do not have a good beginning, if they do not receive the support and encouragement needed during the first years of life, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to compensate fully for the failure later on.

A third-grade teacher in Wyoming put the challenge this way: "With all the talk about school renewal, there is a tendency to overlook elementary schools. The first years must be recognized as the most essential. Until the elementary school becomes a priority for renewal, education in this country will not make much improvement." And responding to this challenge, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching launched, several years ago, a study of the elementary school. We searched the literature, consulted scholars, conducted national and international surveys, and sent researchers into schools all across the country.

During school visits, we were struck, time and time again, by the commitment of principals, the eagerness of students, the concern of parents, and most especially by the dedication of teachers, who are, we concluded, the unsung heroes of the nation. Above all, we were struck by the way so many of the nation's elementary schools have adjusted dramatically to new demands. We concluded that the elementary school is, as former U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett put it, a place of hope.[17]

Still, this is not the time to be complacent.

While inspired by dedicated efforts, we also were troubled by the way most teachers work alone and by the weakened partnership between the home and school, a fragmented relationship described by one principal as "a lack of community at our school." We were troubled, too, by the confusion over what schools should teach and how students should be assessed, issues that go to the very heart of quality education. We also became concerned, while visiting schools, that a rigid daily schedule and poor resources often restrict learning, especially for the least advantaged. Finally, at the very time the nation's children need ethical and moral guidance, we found most schools greatly perplexed about what virtues they should, in fact, be teaching.

We are convinced that a new vision of elementary education is urgently required, one that presents a comprehensive, practical plan of action based on best practices, one that would be appropriate for every school. We agree with James Rodenmayer, the principal at Etna Road Elementary School in Whitehall, Ohio, who said to us: "There is a growing urgency all over the country about the direction of education and a sense that, nationwide, we must do better, for the sake of our children."

How, then, should we proceed?

The plan we present in this report is not just another "pilot project." It is not yet one more novel "experiment." Rather, what we have done is to identify practices that really work and put them all together in what we call the Basic School. The piecemeal approach to school reform has been tried. During the past decade, we have had literally hundreds of isolated innovations. What's needed now is a comprehensive approach

to school renewal, one that pulls together the essential elements of an effective school and makes them available to every child.

After completing our research we concluded that the most essential ingredient of an effective school—the one idea that holds it all together—is best described by the simple word "connections." An effective school connects people, to create *community*. An effective school connects the curriculum, to achieve *coherence*. An effective school connects classrooms and resources, to enrich the *climate*. And an effective school connects learning to life, to build *character*.

These four priorities—*community*, *coherence*, *climate*, and *character*—are the building blocks for the Basic School. Fitted within each of these priorities are specific proposals—programs that, we discovered, really work. The goal, then, of the Basic School is to present an overall strategy for renewal, one that seems to fit all institutions while, at the same time, encouraging every public and private school to develop, within this overarching framework, its own distinctive program.

First: The School as Community

Building Community. The Basic School has, as the first requirement, a clear and vital mission. The school is a place where everyone comes together to promote learning. Each classroom is, itself, a community. But in the Basic School, the separate classrooms are connected by a sense of *purpose*, in a climate that is *just*, *disciplined*, and *caring*, with occasions for *celebration*.

Teachers as Leaders. In the Basic School, teachers are empowered. Working together as teams, they serve as

mentors to their students, and have the time and resources needed to be professionally renewed. The principal in the Basic School is *lead* teacher, the one who guides the school, more by inspiration than directive.

Parents as Partners. In the Basic School, the circle of community extends outward to embrace parents, who are viewed as the child's first and most important teachers. A vital partnership is created between the home and school, one that begins during preschool years, is strengthened when the child formally enrolls, and continues from kindergarten through grade five.

SECOND: A CURRICULUM WITH COHERENCE

The Centrality of Language. In the Basic School, literacy is the first and most essential goal. All children are expected to become proficient in the written and spoken word. But in the Basic School, language is defined broadly to include words, numbers, and the arts, the essential tools of learning which, taken together, help create a curriculum with coherence.

The Core Commonalities. In the Basic School, all students become well informed. They study, with diligence, the various fields of knowledge, which are organized, thematically, within a framework called the "Core Commonalities." These eight commonalities, based on shared human experiences, integrate the traditional subjects, helping students see connections across the disciplines and relate what they learn to life.

Measuring Results. Assessment in the Basic School is, always, in the service of learning. Academic standards

are established both in language and the Core Commonalities, with benchmarks to monitor student achievement. The personal and social qualities of student development also are evaluated carefully by teachers. The Basic School is, in the end, accountable to students, to parents, and to the larger community.

THIRD: A CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

Patterns to Fit Purpose. In the Basic School, every student is encouraged to become a disciplined, creative, well-motivated learner. Class size is kept small, and the teaching schedule and student grouping arrangements are open, to empower teachers and promote learning. Connections are made across the generations, to enrich students' lives.

Resources to Enrich. The Basic School makes available to all students rich resources for learning, from building blocks to books. Libraries, zoos, museums, and parks in the surrounding community become resources, too. And on the threshold of a new century, the Basic School gives all students access to the new electronic tools that connect each classroom to vast networks of knowledge.

Services for Children. The Basic School is committed to serving the whole child, acknowledging that a student's physical, social, and emotional well-being also relates to learning. Beyond a solid academic program, the school provides basic health and counseling services for students, referrals for families, and a new calendar and clock, with after-school and summer enrichment programs for learning and creative play.

FOURTH: A COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER

The Core Virtues. The Basic School is concerned with the ethical dimensions of a child's life. The goal is to assure that all students, on leaving school, will have developed a keen sense of personal and civic responsibility. Seven core virtues, such as respect, compassion, and perseverance, are emphasized to guide the Basic School as it promotes excellence in learning, as well as living.

Living with Purpose. The core virtues of the Basic School are taught by both word and deed. Through the curriculum, through school climate, and through service, students are encouraged to apply the lessons of the classroom to the world around them.

These, then, are the four priorities of the Basic School. The first priority, *community*, focuses on how people relate to one another. The second priority, *coherence*, considers what all students should learn. The third priority, *climate*, deals with effective teaching and learning. The fourth priority, *character*, considers how the school experience shapes the ethical and moral lives of children.

Many proposals presented in this report are already being practiced, to one degree or another, in schools from coast to coast. What we propose to do, however, is bring them all together in the Basic School, while encouraging every elementary school to implement the proposed plan in its own distinctive way. And it is our hope that this report—this vision we call the Basic School—will be helpful to principals and teachers, in all schools, who are working so diligently to educate the nation's children. What we envision, in short, is a continuing commitment to renewal.

In the end, the goal of the Basic School is not just to build a better school, but, above all, to build a better world for children. It is our deepest hope that not a single child, let alone a whole generation of children, should pass through the schoolhouse door unprepared for the world that lies before them. And there is, we believe, an urgency to this effort. Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral wrote: "Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, his mind is being developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow, his name is today."[18]

THE SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY

Building Community

> The Basic School has, as the first requirement, a clear and vital mission. The school is a place where everyone comes together to promote learning. Each classroom is, itself, a community. But in the Basic School, the separate classrooms are connected by a sense of *purpose*, in a climate that is *just*, *disciplined*, and *caring*, with occasions for *celebration*.

The Basic School is, above all else, a *community* for learning.[19] There is simply no way to achieve *educational* excellence in a school where purposes are blurred, where teachers and students fail to communicate thoughtfully with each other, and where parents are uninvolved in the education of their children.[20] As Patricia Bolaños at the Key School in Indianapolis puts it, "You have to have community before anything else." Community is, without question, the glue that holds an effective school together.

As we entered Jackson-Keller Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas, a parent greeted us at the door. Second-graders, leaving on a field trip, cheerfully waved goodbye. Moving down corridors filled with colorful handprints of the

children, we passed one classroom where third-graders were planting seeds. Next door, a team of teachers from different grades worked together on a new lesson plan. As we walked along, the principal, Alicia Thomas, hugged children, greeted teachers, and occasionally paused to talk with parents. We passed two girls holding hands—a fifth-grader and a first-grader. Mrs. Thomas told us they were part of the school's "buddy" system. "The key to any successful school," she noted, "is *community*."[21]

The Basic School, which brings all elementary grades together, begins formally with kindergarten, while also building partnerships with local preschool programs. At the upper end, there is no rigid breakpoint. Some Basic Schools may run through grade four, others grade six. We suggest grade five, for several reasons. First, ten-year-olds, who typically are not yet in puberty, are often more comfortable with younger children than with teenagers. Further, by staying with the young students, fifth-graders can have a "capstone experience" in their final year, tutoring and caring for younger students, applying what they've learned, becoming, themselves, leaders in the school community.

Community in the Basic School also requires "a sense of place," a facility that is functional and aesthetically appealing.[22] Even old buildings can become colorful and inviting. The school also should be a small and friendly place.[23] "If all the research on the best environments in which to . . . educate children could be boiled down to three words, they would be 'Small Is Beautiful,'" notes educator Winifred Gallagher.[24]

In the Basic School, no arbitrary enrollment line is drawn.[25] However, as a rule of thumb, the school should be small enough for everyone to be known by name—perhaps with

three to five hundred students.[26] Larger schools might be organized as "schools within a school."

The Nelson County School District, in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, discovered how school size can, indeed, enrich learning. District leaders were about to close a rural school. Local citizens fought the consolidation plan, arguing that no other school would work as well.

After interviewing students, teachers, staff members, and parents to learn more about the school's success, consultants concluded: "A school that works is a place that welcomes people, a place where everyone is known by name. Rather than being 'institutional' in character, it looks and feels like 'home.'"

A school community that "looks and feels like home" is organized not around classrooms and the clock, but around "relationships and ideas," as Trinity University professor Thomas J. Sergiovanni puts it. Communities, he says, "create social structures that bond people together in a oneness, and that bind them to a set of shared values and ideas. . . . In communities members create their lives with others who have similar intentions."[27]

But community doesn't just happen, even in a small school.[28] It is a deliberate process of renewal that never ends. What we are *really* talking about is the *culture* of the school, the way people relate to one another, their attitudes and values, the traditions that are shared.[29]

We determined from school visits that six well-defined qualities move a school from a fragmented structure to a vital

community for learning. Simply stated, the Basic School achieves *community* as it becomes:

- a *purposeful* place,
- a *communicative* place,
- a *just* place,
- a *disciplined* place,
- a *caring* place, and
- a *celebrative* place.

These qualities, taken together, create the community every Basic School should strive to be.

A Purposeful Place

The Basic School begins with a clear and vital mission, with learning as the goal. It may seem odd to make this point. Schools are, by definition, places of learning. However, when we asked principals and teachers about the goals at their school, many, we discovered, were uncertain. One principal told us: "We're still debating school goals with the Board." Teachers, on the other hand, often started talking not about school purposes, but about what they were doing in their own classroom. A third-grade teacher candidly acknowledged: "The goals at our school seem forever blurred. Everyone has a separate agenda. There seems to be no overall agreement about the purposes for our children."[30]

The Basic School is a purposeful place. The school affirms, as its central mission, that every child has a right to a quality education, that high academic standards must be set, and that every student can and will succeed in ways that reflect his or her own unique aptitudes and interests. Further, everyone in the school is regularly reminded of this vision. Each morning

at the Willard Model School in Norfolk, Virginia, students and staff recite this pledge: "I believe that I can be a good student. I believe that I can achieve. I believe that if I work hard I will succeed. Therefore, I will work hard each day to do my best. I can learn. I will learn."

Beyond an unswerving commitment to "excellence for all," the Basic School embraces *five specific goals* that focus on the whole child—on the educational, social, emotional, physical, and moral needs of children. These are:

- *First, to communicate effectively.* In the Basic School, language is not just another subject. It is the means by which all other subjects are pursued. All students in the school are expected to read with comprehension, write with clarity, effectively speak and listen, accurately compute, and engage creatively with the arts. The goal is literacy for all.

- *Second, to acquire a core of knowledge.* All Basic School students become well informed. They learn about the world around them through a study of history, science, literature, civics, and other academic subjects. The educational focus of the Basic School is, however, not just on *content*, but *context*. Beyond a core of knowledge, students make connections across disciplines and, through an integrated curriculum, relate what they learn to life.

- *Third, to be a motivated learner.* Students in the Basic School are encouraged to remain curious. They learn how to gather information,

become problem solvers, and develop both the urge and skills to study on their own. The principal and teachers in the Basic School serve as mentors to students and make available to them rich resources. They also organize the school day and group students in ways that enhance learning.

- *Fourth, to have a sense of well-being.* The focus of the Basic School is on the *whole* child. The school acknowledges that every student has special aptitudes and interests, as well as special needs, and that when it comes to learning, mind and body cannot be divided. The goal is to give all children the support they need to be physically healthy, socially competent, and emotionally secure.

- *Fifth, to live responsibly.* In the Basic School, there is a commitment to good character. The school accepts its obligation to teach, by word and deed, those core virtues that promote good conduct and good citizenship. The goal is to assure that each student becomes an ethically responsible person.

Several years ago, a RAND Corporation study found that students are most successful in schools where the principal, parents, teachers, and students pull together to achieve a common cause, where they accept their responsibility to ensure that the shared educational goals of the school will be met. Researchers concluded that, in successful schools, there is a social contract that staff and students accept as they join the school community.[31]

In the Basic School, there is a sense of purpose.

A Communicative Place

Beyond shared goals, community in the Basic School means *good communication*. The mission statement of the school is not just a symbolic gesture, something to be ratified and filed away. Rather, it's something to be discussed and continuously applied to school life. Teachers review school goals with parents at the beginning of the year and during mid-year conferences. Students, too, participate in discussions of the school's objectives.

Community in the Basic School is sustained through thoughtful discourse in a climate that is collegial. Everyone in the school speaks and listens carefully to each other, creating a relationship of trust among the principal, teachers, and students. At Laurel Ridge Elementary School in Fairfax, Virginia, the motto reads, "Kindness is *spoken* here."

We noticed, during one school visit, a second-grade teacher asking a third-grade teacher about a troubled child she'd had the year before. Down the hall, a first-grader was listening attentively as his teacher explained why students aren't allowed to go to the playground alone. Later in the day, the principal dropped by the teachers' lounge to visit a newly recruited colleague. These quiet exchanges, which go on continuously in many schools, involved openness and honesty, accompanied by respect.

Effective communication in the Basic School flows from the *integrity of ideas*, not just the authority of an office. There is, in the school, less emphasis on communicating "through

channels" and more emphasis on the quality of the message. People in the school not only *speak* to one another with respect, but *listen* sensitively, too. In corridors and in classrooms, students feel free to express their own ideas. The conversation between teachers and students, always, is a two-way street and, in the Basic School, each classroom is itself a community, a place where teachers, themselves, become learners.

In the end, what matters most in building community is not the amount of talk, but the *quality* of the interaction. All too often our efforts to speak and listen seem to be a vicious spiral moving downward. But Wayne Booth, of the University of Chicago, reminds us that: ". . . we have all experienced moments when the spiral moved upward, when one party's effort to listen and speak just a little bit better produced a similar response, making it possible to try a bit harder—and on up the spiral to moments of genuine understanding."[32]

In the Basic School, such moments of understanding are routine.

A Just Place

The Basic School is a *just* community, a place where everyone—the principal, teachers, and students—are respectful of each other. Young children expect justice. They have an almost intuitive sense of fairness. During school visits we heard students declare while at play, "That's not fair!" Indeed, school conflicts among students frequently are sparked by the feeling that someone is getting special favors. While adults may not voice their concern quite so bluntly, this same sense of fairness, this commitment to equal rights is, even for grownups, never far below the surface.

No community can be sustained if dignity is denied.

In the Basic School, there is no "tracking." The school rejects absolutely any separation of students into "winners" and "losers." Rather, students are grouped in a variety of ways, during the day and week, to accommodate a variety of goals. Also in the Basic School, all resources for learning—books, computers, art supplies—are divided equitably among students and across grade levels, with the principal and teachers being attentive to every child, supporting, especially, those with exceptional physical or emotional needs.

In the Basic School, the social and educational expectations for *both* boys and girls are based on performance, not stereotypes.[33] We did discover, during our research, that children themselves feel that boys and girls differ somewhat in their performance of selected school activities. For example, elementary school students believe that girls are better than boys at "writing reports or stories," "playing a musical instrument," and "acting in plays." Boys, on the other hand, were judged to be better at "playing sports" and "doing science experiments"[34] (table 2). Students in the Basic School are encouraged to talk about these matters, considering why such attitudes exist.

Table 2

Who Does Better at Each of These Activities, Girls Your Age, Boys Your Age, or Are Girls and Boys Your Age the Same?

(Survey of Students)

	BOTH THE SAME	GIRLS BETTER	BOYS BETTER
Solving math problems	74%	12%	14%
Doing a science experiment	68	8	24
Writing reports or stories	61	33	6
Acting in plays	60	36	4
Drawing and painting	58	29	13
Playing a musical instrument	57	33	10
Speaking in class	52	25	23
Playing sports/gym	40	2	58

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

The Basic School, as a just place, seeks to promote without prejudice equality of opportunity. And students from every racial, ethnic, and religious background are warmly welcomed there. Today, the face of America's youth is changing. By the year 2000, more than one-third of the students in the nation's schools will be African-American, Asian, or Hispanic. In many schools, the majority are already nonwhite. The Basic School celebrates this rich tapestry of talent, affirming dignity amidst diversity.

The Basic School is, then, a *just* place where, as one teacher put it, "everyone is special."

A Disciplined Place

The Basic School is a *disciplined* place. Every student in the school discovers, very early, that his or her rights must be balanced by responsibility to the group. Increasingly, for many students, this is a problem.[35] Teachers repeatedly talked to us about how students live unstructured lives, how they hear the obscenities of adults, see endless violence on television, in videos and movies.[36] It's not surprising, they said, that the incivility that saturates the child's world spills over into classrooms and flares up on playgrounds.

During lunch break at a mid-sized, suburban school, one seasoned fourth-grade teacher told us: "Every year more and more of my time is spent with discipline. I spend a lot of time teaching cooperation and courtesy. The ability of children to play together without fighting has decreased." A third-grade teacher in Minnesota said: "I see lots of disturbing conduct which seems to be growing even among the younger students. But today's children are simply imitating the violence they see in the adult world."

It's true that most elementary schools we visited were safe and cordial places. Still, the drift toward incivility, even among young children, is troubling. And our research revealed that students themselves report discipline as a problem. For example, when we asked nine- to eleven-year-olds about student conduct at their school, more than half said "fighting" and "bullying" are serious problems. More than a third said "stealing" is a problem, and 13 percent identified "carrying weapons such as knives" as a serious problem at their school (table 3).[37]

Table 3

Which of These Are
Serious Problems in Your School?

(Survey of Students)

	Percentage Responding "Yes"
Students fighting with each other	56%
Students bullying or picking on each other	54
Stealing	38
Students carrying weapons such as knives	13

Source: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Children, like the rest of us, work best with reasonable rules, ones that are sensitively established, thoughtfully explained, and fairly enforced.[38] Further, researchers reveal that academic achievement improves in schools where students feel safe.[39] Therefore, the Basic School, as a disciplined place, has a code of conduct, which students themselves help define, and standards of kindness, punctuality, and courtesy are taught, by example, in classrooms every day.[40] Child psychologist David Elkind puts the challenge this way: "Children need a sense that somebody cares enough to protect them. To provide that sense, we must become adults to our kids."[41]

A fourth-grade teacher in Rochester, New York, explained to us how he discusses school rules with his students first day of school. "The kids know what to expect," he said. "It helps them have a strong sense of identity, and builds community. Some of my students live such peripatetic lives. They move, and family relationships change and, for them, it's nice if a teacher can be a rock. Or if your mom just went to jail or your

father just left, you can come to class and find a little stability, a little bit of peace."[42]

In the Basic School, students learn that life is a balance of freedom and constraints. They begin to understand that everyone lives within limits and that, along with freedom, the rights of others also must be respected. The goal is not to have a list of unenforceable commandments. Rather, it is to assure that all parts of school life are governed by high standards.

The Basic School is a disciplined place.

A Caring Place

The Basic School is a *caring* community, a place where the principal, teachers, and students are respectfully attentive to each other. In a world of hard-edged competition, the term "caring" may sound soft, even sentimental. However, everyone, regardless of age, needs to be loved and continuously affirmed from birth to the very end. Biologist Mary E. Clark reminds us that social embeddedness is the essence of our nature. "Human beings," she said, "have an absolute need for social intercourse from the first moments of life."[43]

Children, especially, need caring. Yet many in this country feel lonely,[44] neglected, even threatened. About 40 percent of elementary school students go home every afternoon to an empty house, according to researchers.[45] About one in three "worry a lot."[46] And one-fourth say they are afraid of "being threatened or attacked in their own neighborhood"[47] (table 4). James P. Comer, child psychiatrist at Yale University and a highly respected authority on children, insists that education cannot be isolated from the emotional needs of children. ". . . you've got to provide an environment that allows children to

feel wanted, valued, and accepted, one that allows them to accept you."[48]

Table 4

Which of These Describes You or Your School?

(Survey of Students)

	PERCENTAGE RESPONDING "YES"
Students often feel afraid that they will be punished at my school	35%
I worry a lot	31
I am afraid of being threatened or attacked in my own neighborhood	26

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Thus, the Basic School is a "community of caring." Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who has promoted just such a community for years, put the challenge this way: "Our children need to be taught, both at home and in school, the importance of caring, responsibility, respect, trust, and family in a time when these values need tremendous reinforcement. Our children need to know that these same values have meaning and relevance in the world which they face every day—in their families, their classrooms, their communities."[49]

In the Basic School, students are encouraged to reach out to others, not just socially, but educationally as well. There is, in the school, a "buddy" system across grade levels, with first- and fifth-graders, for example, teaming up on projects, with teachers continuously providing the support. A third-grade

teacher in Nebraska made this point: "My philosophy in teaching is simple: to show every child that he or she is unique and loved. Children need two valuable gifts from a teacher—a sense of personal worth and a sense of respect. They need a climate that offers love and gives caring, all to support learning."

During a hurried lunch break at a large inner-city school, we talked with teachers about caring. "How is it possible to create such a climate?" we wanted to know. "I emphasize to kids," a fifth-grade teacher responded, "that you can do positive things in groups. I work with the whole 'gang' concept, that there are good gangs and bad gangs. I stress the positive side of groups, one in which kids learn to care about one another. Children in this school live in tough neighborhoods. They need to feel that we can get through this together. I have tried planting a seed of hope, to let them know someone really cares."

At a time when social bonds are tenuous, the Basic School is a caring place.

A Celebrative Place

The Basic School is, finally, a place of celebration. Families celebrate, nations celebrate, and, surely, schools must pause occasionally to celebrate—beginning first day of school.[80] Rather than "drop" their children off, parents, grandparents, and guardians are welcomed into the Basic School, joining with teachers, students, and staff, for both remembrance and anticipation.

At the Dick School in Philadelphia, parents and students gathered, first day of school, on the playground. Soon everyone was invited into the colorfully decorated assembly hall. Nilsa Gonzalez, the principal, welcomed everyone,

introduced the staff, including the custodian and secretaries. Returning students also welcomed the newcomers. Then, school purposes were discussed and plans for the coming year carefully explained. Everyone asked lots of questions. Many parents stayed all day, meeting with their children's teachers, sharing experiences with one another. "At the end of the day, I was giving everyone hugs," Ms. Gonzalez reported. "And I was still giving hugs the second day."[51]

It was a moment of celebration.

In the end, the Basic School is an institution held together by something far more than connecting corridors and a common schedule. It is a *community for learning*, with shared purpose, good communication, a climate with justice, discipline, and caring, and occasions for celebration. These qualities cannot be taken for granted. They must be continuously nurtured and occasionally assessed.

Specifically, we recommend that, at least once a year, the Basic School pause to take inventory, to evaluate itself—*as a community*—asking everyone to respond to questions such as these: "Does this school have shared educational goals?" "Do we speak and listen carefully to each other?" "Is everyone at our school treated fairly?" "Do we have reasonable rules that are well known and sensitively enforced?" "What evidence do we have that this is a caring place?" "Do we have occasions for celebration?" "Which school activities strengthen these qualities, and which restrict them?"

Community is, then, the first priority of the Basic School.

Teachers as Leaders

> In the Basic School, teachers are empowered. Working together as teams, they serve as mentors to their students, and have the time and resources needed to be professionally renewed. The principal in the Basic School is *lead* teacher, the one who guides the school, more by inspiration than directive.

In the Basic School, teachers are the leaders. Who, after all, knows more about the classroom? Who is better able to inspire children? Who can evaluate, more sensitively, the educational progress of each student? And who but teachers can create a true community for learning? Teachers in the Basic School work together. They become mentors to their students, and are professionally renewed. Teachers are, without question, the heartbeat of an effective school.

The principal in the Basic School is *lead* teacher, the one who guides the institution more by inspiration than directive. Like a symphony conductor, the principal, working collaboratively with teachers, brings the school together in melodic ways.[52] Former United States Commissioner of Education Harold Howe II described the partnership this way: "If I had to pick out one set of heroes and heroines in the current school reform movement . . . , I would be frustrated by having to choose between two groups: those teachers who have managed to

change their classrooms into places where their students can find excitement about learning . . . and those principals who have developed the personal skills to encourage and help teachers to reach for such classrooms amidst all the cacophony of school reform."[53]

Occasionally, teachers with whom we spoke criticized their principal for lack of vision. Most often, however, they expressed appreciation for the support and encouragement they receive.[54] One fifth-grade teacher told us: "I feel that the one thing that makes our school succeed is the principal." Further, 70 percent of the teachers we surveyed rated the overall performance of their principal as "excellent" or "good." Nearly two-thirds gave equally high ratings to principals for their "treatment of teachers as partners"[55] (table 5). "The key to building a successful school," one principal noted, "is to move away from the traditional 'principal-staff' role and create in the school a feeling of *community*."

Table 5

Please Evaluate the Principal in Your School
in Relation to Each of the Following Attitudes or Activities

	Percentage Responding "Excellent" or "Good"
Support for teachers	71%
Overall performance	67
Treatment of teachers as partners	62

Source: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 1987.

Lillian Brinkley, principal of the Willard Model School in Norfolk, Virginia, described her role this way: "I believe leadership is the ability to inspire others. I don't ask teachers to do anything I wouldn't do. Every teacher is a leader at this school. When teachers have ownership, they give their best and see to it that their project succeeds." Willard School has faculty meetings every Thursday for one hour while paraprofessionals conduct classes. Principal Brinkley ends every staff meeting with a discussion about dreams. She asks each teacher, "What wishes do you have for yourselves? What dreams do you have for your students?"[56]

For the principal and teachers to lead, they first must be empowered. We hear a lot of talk these days about "site-based management,"[57] about giving the principal and teachers—and surely local school boards—more control.[58] Local schools, we found, are often severely restricted, with lots of accountability and little authority to act. The reality is, however, that most local boards are still able to make only "marginal changes," according to Stanford University professor Michael W. Kirst[59]—which, of course, restricts the principal and teachers, too. One principal complained, "I'm constantly being told that I should lead and yet I'm spending more and more of my time just filling out the forms."

Further, it is simply impossible to create the community we envision unless teachers have more authority over instruction.[60] According to a recent U.S. Department of Education survey, only about one-third of teachers in this country feel they have "much influence" over the discipline policy at their school. A similar percentage feel they have influence over the curriculum. Only about one-third say they can actually influence the content of "inservice" programs, and just 27 percent feel they can decide how students should be "grouped"[61] (table 6).

Table 6

At This School, How Much Influence Do You Think Teachers Have Over School Policy in These Areas?

	Percentage Responding
Determining discipline policy	37%
Establishing curriculum	35
Determining content of inservice programs	33
Setting policy on grouping students in classes by ability	27

SOURCE: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Who's In Charge? Teachers' Views on Control Over School Policy and Classroom Practices, *Research Report*, August 1994; percentage of teachers responding 5 or 6 on a 6-point scale of agreement.

Teachers, to be most effective, must be actively involved in determining school practices, working under the guidance of the principal, within a policy framework established by the school board. The school board is an absolutely essential partner in the Basic School. We recommend, specifically, that both the school board and the elementary school be freed from unnecessary external mandates. The school board, in turn, should place confidence in the principal and teachers and hold them responsible for outcomes, not day-to-day procedures. We agree with scholar John Goodlad: "There is no educating of young people in the school system. It takes place in tens of thousands of individual schools."[62]

Teachers as Team Members

Once empowered, teachers in the Basic School work together as team members who view the *whole* school, not just their

own classroom, as the place for learning. Research reveals that the most successful learning does, in fact, occur in schools where teachers not only teach skillfully in separate classrooms, but also find solutions *together*.[63] Robert Spillane, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, makes the point: "All of the current thinking and research on good teaching practices and effective schools point to the importance of collegiality among teachers."[64]

As members of a school team, Basic School teachers shape a curriculum that is cohesive, an assessment program that is coherent, and a learning environment that is enriched. Teachers *prefer* to work in groups, especially in curriculum planning. When we asked elementary teachers who best controls the curriculum, they expressed strongest preference for "groups of teachers working together." Only 5 percent of the teachers we surveyed felt the best way to control the curriculum was to have each teacher work on his or her own[65] (table 7). One fifth-grade teacher said: "After years of working in isolation, I recently became part of a four-teacher team. As a result, I find my enjoyment has greatly increased, my teaching has become more effective, and students are learning more."

Table 7

Who Do You Think Best Controls the Content of the School Curriculum?

(Survey of Teachers)

	Percentage Agreeing
Groups of teachers working together	40%
State officials	27
Local authorities	27
Each teacher working alone on his/her own	5
National officials	1

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

The key, of course, is *time*.[66] Yet time is precisely what most teachers do *not* have.[67] Typically, elementary school teachers begin instruction with the first bell in the morning.[68] They are still with children to the last bell in the afternoon, "with hardly time for rest stops," one teacher said. There are, of course, brief lunch breaks and perhaps recess, but even then teachers often are "on duty," held responsible for the supervision of their students.[69]

"The way schools are structured seems to conspire against collegiality and the empowerment it can produce," states Gene I. Maeroff in his insightful study *The Empowerment of Teachers*,[70] a conclusion supported by our research. Specifically, 41 percent of U.S. teachers said they "seldom" or "never" meet with other teachers for planning and preparation. In contrast, only 16 percent of Japanese teachers said they "seldom" or "never" meet[71] (table 8). A second-grade teacher in a Midwest school said, with a touch of sadness: "We are so busy *doing*, that, quite literally, we have no time for *planning*."

Another teacher told us: "Days, even weeks, go by and I am unable to have a serious, professional conversation with any of my colleagues in the school."

Table 8

How Often Do You Meet with One Other Teacher to Plan and Prepare Together?

(Survey of Teachers)

	SELDOM/ NEVER	SOMETIMES	FREQUENTLY
Russia	63%	34%	3%
Zimbabwe	52	46	3
UNITED STATES	41	42	17
Germany	37	49	14
Chile	36	41	23
China	35	53	13
Turkey	33	46	21
Israel	29	41	30
Mexico	28	50	22
Great Britain	23	50	27
Italy	22	30	48
Japan	16	59	25

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

In the Basic School, time is regularly set aside for teacher collaboration[72]—preferably each a week. Further, teachers simply must meet, for several days, at the beginning and end of each school year. Freeing teachers for planning is not easy, yet such arrangements are key to an effective school and many schools are finding ways to do it.[73]

In Fairfax County, Virginia, teachers use Monday afternoons for planning. Students are dismissed from school and go to

programs organized by the community, at no expense to schools. At the Key School in Indianapolis, Indiana, parents and other community members organize all-school assemblies or special projects for half a day each week, so teachers are free to work together.[74] In Southbury, Connecticut, teachers at Gainfield Elementary School organize themselves in teams, with groups rotating their planning sessions every other week. According to the principal, "If schools don't provide time for their teachers to get together, they merely give lip service to the idea of restructuring schools."

Several years ago, when the Danebo Elementary School in Eugene, Oregon, began to reshape its curriculum, teachers discovered, very quickly, that they needed time. With parent and school board approval, the school day was extended one-half hour, four days a week. With this extra instructional time, it was possible for classes to end two hours early on Wednesday. Teachers now meet from noon until four o'clock every Wednesday afternoon, planning together, sharing ideas. Principal James Winger said: "Teachers now feel like the professionals they are."

Whatever the arrangement, we cannot stress strongly enough the importance of having the principal and teachers plan together. Only then can they be leaders.

We also strongly recommend that teachers meet not just with colleagues in their own grade level, but across grade levels, too. All too often first-grade teachers, when they do have time to get together, meet only with first-grade teachers, and on up the line. This "layered approach" to planning usually results in a lack of continuity in learning from grade to grade. Teacher planning teams in the Basic School are organized not just horizontally, but *vertically*, making it possible for

teachers—from kindergarten to grade five—to plan a course of study that spirals upward, creating a seamless web of learning.

Several years ago, Verde Vegas Elementary School in Las Vegas, Nevada, organized itself into "teaching families," with teachers from kindergarten through grade five. Grade levels became blurred; lesson units were planned for coherence through all the grades. Teachers combined field trips. "Reading buddies" were organized across the grades, with older students tutoring younger ones.[75] At another school, where vertical "family groups" have been formed, a third-grade teacher said: "Since we've been in families, children and teachers feel a new unity. There's loyalty to one another, too. You get to know children before they come to you, and you watch them grow and progress, moving upward."

Teachers as Mentors

Teachers, as team members, give direction to the Basic School. But the focus always is on students. Excellence in education, without question, means excellence in teaching, and teachers in the Basic School become mentors, encouraging students to learn and think. Educator Theodore Sizer said it best: "Teachers do not transfer information from the brain of the teacher to the brain of the student, but rather, they make students think. Education is about habits of the mind."[76] Excellent teaching is, unquestionably, the key ingredient in an effective school.

During their preparation for teaching, and as part of their ongoing education, Basic School teachers must have a solid grounding in the tools of learning—English, mathematics, and the arts—and also in general education. They must learn, as well, the principles of good pedagogy. During school visits, we were often asked about the qualities of a good teacher.

People wanted to know just what are the characteristics that promote excellence in the classroom.

As a first step, we decided to go directly to the students. Not surprisingly, pupils in the elementary school rate the *personal* qualities of teachers highest, in our survey. Forty-eight percent, for example, chose "understanding student problems" as an important characteristic of a good teacher. "Being kind and friendly" was identified by 45 percent as important. Almost 40 percent selected "setting a good example for the students" as important. "Knowing the subject" was ranked sixth on the student choices, reflecting the fact, perhaps, that students just assume teachers are well informed (table 9).[77] Clearly, when children walk into classrooms, they are concerned most about who the teacher *is*.

We also asked the parents of elementary school children about the qualities of a good teacher. Their responses differed, in several ways, from students. For example, "motivating students to learn" was selected by 86 percent of the parents, while only 37 percent of the students made this selection. "Being willing to explain things in different ways" received strong support from parents, too. Nearly 40 percent gave "staying in contact with home and parents" high marks as well—which incidentally, only 9 percent of the students supported. Only about 30 percent of the parents chose "understanding student problems" as an important quality in a teacher (table 9).[78]

Table 9

Qualities of a Good Teacher

(Survey of Students and Survey of Parents)

	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS
Understanding student problems	48%	29%
Being kind and friendly	45	8
Setting a good example for the students	39	36
Helping or motivating students to learn	37	86
Willing to explain things in different ways	33	40
Knowing the subject they are teaching	33	33
Helping students learn to memorize facts	18	2
Not playing favorites	14	4
Keeping order in the classroom	12	10
Teaching good habits	9	12
Staying in contact with home and parents	9	38

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States); respondents could choose three qualities from a list of eleven.

Finally, teachers, both by word and example, also defined for us the characteristics of a good teacher. During classroom visits, we observed that the styles and personalities of effective teachers vary greatly. Some are jovial, others more subdued. Some create more structured activities, others prefer a looser organization. One second-grade teacher said her approach to teaching was informal: "I'm not interested in 'telling' children all they need to know. I provide lots of classroom experiences that start them on the path to knowing, and wanting to know." A fourth-grade teacher, however, told us she wanted her lesson plans more structured: "Children like to explore, but they also like to have a product to share with others. I define goals and make assignments."

Clearly, there is not a single path to good pedagogy, not just one way of doing things. Students can be inspired in a variety of ways, and we celebrate this rich mosaic of teacher talent. Still, after reviewing the literature, visiting hundreds of classrooms, and talking with teachers and students, we discovered four characteristics which can define the qualities of an effective teacher.

- *First, a good teacher is well informed.* Basic School teachers possess substantial knowledge in the content areas to be taught. They have a solid foundation in liberal studies, with special emphasis on English, mathematics, and the arts. They have, as well, the ability to teach across the curriculum, helping students place their learning in a larger context. "A profession can be no better than the knowledge base on which it rests," observes John Goodlad.[79]

- *Second, a good teacher knows children.* Basic School teachers are attentive, always, to the whole child.[80] Trained as observers of children, effective teachers see the vital interplay of the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and moral growth of students. School reformers talk about academic content, which is crucial, but it is equally important that teachers be alert to how children feel, and to their social and moral development. A kindergarten teacher said, "I not only prepare a lesson plan, I also must think about each child."

- *Third, a good teacher empowers students.* Basic School teachers are well grounded in the art of teaching and use a variety of methods. They coach students, give guidance. But there comes a time, in every class, when students are encouraged to explore *their own questions*, moving from the familiar to the unknown. Eleanore Zurbruegg, an award-winning teacher at the Ridgeway Elementary School in Memphis, Tennessee, says: "What a teacher does and says can stay with a child forever. I try to build confidence, awaken curiosity, excite young minds, shape attitudes, encourage discoveries, and invite learning."[81]

- *Fourth, a good teacher is an open, authentic human being.* Basic School teachers are honest in their relationships with students, at once confident and also willing to acknowledge what they don't know, thus gaining credibility and respect. The teacher has integrity and warmth as a human being, and is someone who genuinely likes children. When we think of a great teacher, we remember a person whose qualities are those of a respected and trusted friend. As one teacher put it, "I want my students to care about me."

Much of what we know about good pedagogy sounds familiar. There remain, however, some old-fashioned, yet enduring, qualities that work—command of the material to be taught, contagious enthusiasm for the work to be done, optimism about the potential of all children, and authenticity as a true mentor and model for each student. Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, summed

up the teacher's task this way: "Reaching every student rather than covering the curriculum, connecting to all learners rather than merely offering education, is our task."[82]

Teachers as Scholars

Finally, Basic School teachers must be professionally renewed, staying well informed and keeping up with the most effective ways to teach. After all, continuing education is a requirement for doctors, dentists, lawyers, nurses, architects—why not for teachers, who each day shape the lives of children? It seems so obvious that teachers should stay informed so they, in turn, can help students learn. We found, however, that staff development is a low priority in most districts.

Almost all schools do have two or three "inservice days" each year. These are, however, often little more than lectures offered up by "experts"—long on process and short on substance.[83] One teacher described the inservice program at her school as "an example of what a good teacher should *not* do." Further, when we surveyed teachers internationally, 40 percent of U.S. teachers described the time spent in ongoing training as "disappointing," the highest negative response among all countries studied[84] (table 10). One teacher commented: "I took a seminar on teaching methods. It was a waste of time. Why don't we *ask* teachers what they *need* instead of lecturing to them?"

Table 10

Most of the Time I Have Spent
in Ongoing Training Has Been Disappointing

(Survey of Teachers)

	Percentage Responding "Yes"
United States	40%
Italy	35
Great Britain	32
Russia	29
Japan	24
Germany	24
Israel	23
Chile	19
China	19
Turkey	14
Mexico	12
Zimbabwe	12

Source: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute. The International Schooling Project, 1994.

Staff development is a high priority in the Basic School. There is a recognition that all teachers, to be fully effective, simply must be professionally renewed. We recommend, therefore, that staff development sessions be held regularly throughout the year, with teachers given time to review the latest research and form reading groups to discuss ideas together.

We recommend further that every Basic School establish a formal partnership with a higher learning institution, with teachers, along with the principal, taking the lead in defining the agenda. The college or university can, in turn, be a vital resource to the school by providing workshops and summer institutes. College students can serve as interns at the school, making it easier to free teachers for planning time. Professors

who participate in such collaborative arrangements surely should be rewarded for their work.

The University of Southern California and the Norwood Elementary School in South Central Los Angeles have a collaborative program that works like a "teaching hospital," to borrow a term from medical education. Ten Norwood teachers work as partners with university faculty and students. The university sends staff to the school on a daily basis. Norwood teachers, in turn, attend monthly seminars at the university. Hillary Foliart, a university instructor, notes: "Norwood is a setting in which we can help teachers and student teachers create a better school. They, in turn, can help us improve our work."[85]

Everything we know about teachers suggests that they are able and eager to be leaders. We cannot expect students to shine unless teachers have time to stay professionally renewed, so they, in turn, lead the coming generation. Cyrilla Hergenhan, an award-winning elementary teacher in Catonsville, Maryland, observed: "I have come this far in my education because I have been lifted up on someone else's shoulders. This is how I see my role as teacher. I lift up my students so they can see a more distant horizon. I do this knowing that they will have a vision farther than mine."[86]

Parents as Partners

In the Basic School, the circle of community extends outward to embrace parents, who are viewed as the child's first and most important teachers. A vital partnership is created between the home and school, one that begins during preschool years, is strengthened when the child formally enrolls, and continues from kindergarten through grade five.

"WELCOME" is the first word parents see as they enter the Irving Weber Elementary School in Iowa City, Iowa. This one word completely captures the school's spirit. It's even painted as artwork on wooden ceiling beams spanning the foyer.[87] Down the corridor, just off the media center, parents have a room of their own, a pleasant place with new tables and chairs, books to read, a bulletin board and coffee. Parents who come into the Irving Weber Elementary School immediately feel at home—"WELCOME," as the sign says.

In the Basic School, community begins with the principal, teachers, and students, but the circle quickly extends outward to embrace the family. Parents are, after all, a child's first teachers. The greatest milestones in learning occur not in the

classroom, but in the home. This is the place where language is first encountered, where growth begins, and where values first take root. Samuel G. Sava, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, said it best: "Children absorb, by emotional and intellectual osmosis, as many unspoken lessons about love and work in their homes as they do the spoken lessons of the classroom. It's not just speech and early literacy that good mothers and fathers confer, but flesh-and-blood examples of how to live."[88]

Several years ago, when teachers were asked to identify the *one* issue that should receive the highest priority in public education policy, the vast majority said "strengthening the role of parents."[89] A Gallup poll recently revealed that more than 90 percent of parents surveyed also feel that "greater parent involvement" is "very important."[90] Research over thirty years establishes, unequivocally, that parental involvement has a positive impact on a student's reading and math achievement, behavior in school, and attitudes about school and work.[91] U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley made the point precisely: "The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built."[92]

We begin where we must—with parents. No surrogate or substitute arrangement, however well planned or well intended, can replace a loving, supportive family. The problem is that many of today's parents, especially single parents, feel torn between work and family obligations. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild describes the situation this way: "For all the talk about the importance of children, the cultural climate has become subtly less hospitable to parents who put children first. This is not because parents love children less, but because a 'job culture' has expanded at the expense of a 'family culture.'"[93] Parents, we discovered, agree with this conclusion. Specifically, our survey revealed that 89 percent of the parents

in this country feel that "families are not taking enough responsibility for the welfare of their children" (table 11).

Table 11

Families Are Not Taking Enough Responsibility for the Welfare of Their Children

(Survey of Parents)

	PERCENTAGE AGREEING
UNITED STATES	89%
Great Britain	71
Chile	65
Mexico	54
Germany	54
China	53
Zimbabwe	51
Russia	47
Japan	46
Italy	41
Turkey	38
Israel	29

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

Parents, overwhelmingly, want to do right by their children. They worry in the dark of night about their future, but time is so limited and schedules hectic.[94] "I believe parents love their children," said one teacher, "but in today's society, everyone works and they are just plain tired." Another teacher in an urban Missouri school said: "Parents really do want to spend more time with their children, but they simply are trying to do too much, without help. It's very hard for them to fit the pieces together." Sociologist Kenneth Keniston describes the contemporary parent as "a coordinator without voice or

authority, a maestro trying to conduct an orchestra of players who have never met. . . ."[95]

We hear a lot of talk these days about how schools have failed, and how parents have failed. What's becoming clear is that it's the *partnership* that's failed. We simply must find practical steps to bring the home and school back together. We discovered, during school visits, that many parents, even those with busy schedules, would, in fact, like to be more actively involved but are confused about what "parent involvement" really means. One parent told us: "I didn't do well when I went to school. I was always afraid of teachers and I really don't feel very comfortable about calling the school to find out what I can do. I'm not even sure if they want me." Former U.S. Education Secretary Terrel Bell summarized the problem this way: "A lot of schools advocate parent involvement, but they don't have a specific program to get it done."[96]

The Basic School has a plan.

PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

The first step is to ensure that all children come to school well prepared for formal learning—"ready to learn"—which is, sadly, not the case today for many students. In the summer of 1991, The Carnegie Foundation surveyed more than seven thousand kindergarten teachers. Frankly, we found it troubling, ominous really, that, according to the teachers, 35 percent of the nation's children are not well prepared for school. When asked to identify the areas in which students were deficient, teachers rated "lack of proficiency in language" the most serious problem. Even more disturbing, when we asked how the readiness of last year's students compared to those five years ago, 42 percent said the situation is getting

worse; only 25 percent said it's better; the rest said it's the same.[97]

Almost all teachers also took time to write revealing, often poignant, comments about their students. One observed: "It is so sad to realize just how many children are not ready to learn when they come to school. They deserve to know by age five their full name and the name of the town where they live. They need to know that a pencil is something they write with—not eat—and that someone believes in them, no matter what!" Another teacher wrote: "Too many of my children come to school hungry. They are tired or in need of much love and attention. More and more students are coming with deep emotional problems that interfere with their learning." A third added: "It's terribly discouraging to see children come to school who don't know where they live, can't identify colors, and are unable to recite their full and proper name."[98]

The Basic School reaches out to the parents of preschoolers, who often feel isolated, who frequently have questions and welcome helpful guidance, especially as it relates to school readiness. Specifically, we recommend that an optional parent education program be available in the Basic School for the parents of preschoolers—a Preschool PTA. The goal would be to help parents learn more about child-rearing and build a bridge between the home and school. Such parenting classes could be held at places convenient to parents—in churches, synagogues, Head Start centers, community buildings, housing projects, even work sites.

Lakewood, Ohio, has a Preschool PTA, an informal network of the parents of preschoolers, with three hundred and fifty participating families. Eight neighborhood groups have been organized block by block. Parents get to know their neighbors

and receive educational and emotional support. "Networking is important," said Rebecca Sammon, a Lakewood parent. "It is important to know that you are not alone, whether you are a working mom, or a single mom, and that when you have a problem, you have someone to talk to. You borrow ideas from other parents. Some questions may seem silly, like 'How should your child respond to a bully at preschool?' But these are topics important to parents."

A child born in the neighborhood served by the Dann C. Byck Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, receives a "Byck Baby" tee-shirt from the school-parent organization. A picture of the newborn is displayed proudly on the school bulletin board and the parents of young children receive child-care brochures.[99] A parent library at the school loans books, toys, and games to the family, and school staff members even help parents negotiate time off from work so they can attend parenting classes on such topics as how to read and talk with children and how to promote social skills.[100]

Payoffs have been remarkable. Before preschool parenting classes began, a majority of the kindergartners at Byck needed remedial help. Today, almost all move on successfully to first grade. "We've discovered that the key to helping the children is involving the parents," said Stephanie Hoover, program director.[101]

School Entry Partnership

Ideally, the home-school partnership deepens once the child reaches kindergarten. We found, however, that all too often students are quite literally "dropped off," suggesting that the parents' role has ended and that now it's time for teachers to take over.

One warm September morning, we visited an elementary school on the outskirts of a large Midwestern city.[102] It was first day of school. About twenty-eight five-year-olds had congregated outside the door of a kindergarten classroom. Most had walked to school with a parent, guardian, or older sibling. A few had come alone. When the bell rang, the teacher invited everyone inside, gave each new student a smiling-face nametag, and asked the children to form a circle on the floor. After giving the children reassuring hugs, most parents walked away. A few entered the classroom, but after standing awkwardly on the edges for several minutes, they too drifted out. It was a moment not of bonding, but of separation.

In the Basic School, the home partnership is *strengthened* first day of school. Rather than form a circle on the edges, parents move toward the center. Specifically, we recommend that the school, as well as each classroom, have a carefully planned schedule for the first day, one in which parents and guardians—and, of course, new students—are welcomed to the school by parents, teachers, and older students. Goals are discussed, a school tour is planned, refreshments are available. School board members should also be actively involved. We suggest, too, that each new parent and student be teamed up with a parent and student already active in the school.

American schools are frequently compared to those in Japan, and perhaps more active parent involvement is something we could borrow from the Japanese.

On opening day in Japan, often the whole school welcomes first-graders and their families. Children and mothers dress in their best clothes, grandmothers wear their fanciest kimonos. The principal greets the assembly, introduces staff, and talks about school goals. A local town official may speak, lending a

community presence. Finally, teachers take students to their rooms, show them their desks, and tell them about procedures. "The total effect of everything is a welcome into a new family," according to author Merry White. "The school is always called 'our school.'"[103]

Many parents are, of course, working. We suggest that employers consider giving parents time off, first day of school. After all, workers are excused to vote or to serve on jury duty. Why not give mothers and fathers time off, with pay, when their child first goes to school—to send children the strong message that their education is a partnership between the home and school.

In Massachusetts, Governor William F. Weld announced that parents who are state employees may spend time in their children's schools "to visit classroom teachers, to volunteer in schools, and to serve in school governance." He also asked other employers to provide released time for such activities, beginning at the start of each school year. "I have challenged business to redefine the model of what constitutes good corporate citizenship," he added.[104] North Carolina National Bank gives employees two hours of paid leave each week to work in schools, participate in their children's school activities, or confer with teachers. The bank also matches, dollar for dollar, an employee's financial contribution to his or her child's school. "Successful parenting is as challenging as successful banking," says an official.[105]

A few years ago, *Hemmings Motor News* began "education participation days" by giving employees two days off each year to visit schools, participate in volunteer activities, or observe classes. The program did not evolve from employee pressures; rather, it was initiated by the publication's owners and

managers, who are committed to family-friendly policies. The number of employees participating during the first day was small, but the company continued the program and encouraged employees, out of concern for Vermont's children, families, and schools.[106]

In Cleveland, Ohio, parents, grandparents, and guardians are invited each fall to a Family Day, a time to visit the school, see what happens on a routine day, talk with teachers, and discuss home and school issues. In 1992, "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work" was the theme. To promote participation, over one hundred area employers gave fourteen thousand workers paid time off so parents and others could participate. "Family Day" is now an annual affair, and the number of participating parents, with employer support, keeps growing. According to Michael Charney, a teacher at Lincoln School in Cleveland, "Family Days are a way to move beyond the hope for parental involvement to signaling, in a concrete way, the parent's place in the school."[107]

Student Inventory. Partnership is a two-way street. While parents must learn about the school, schools must also learn, very early, about the child.[108] The harsh truth is, however, that car mechanics often know more about the automobiles entering their shops than educators know about children who enroll in school. Privacy must, without question, be protected. Confidential information is not what we are talking about. It does seem reasonable, however, for schools to gather basic information about the background and interests of a child that relate to learning.

We propose, therefore, that the Basic School use a *Student Inventory*, a simple form that provides a portrait of the student. This might include, for example, a list of favorite books, toys,

and songs, as well as the child's learning milestones, speech development, and early attempts at drawing and writing. The child's health history would be recorded, too, with the inventory noting such basics as height, weight, and immunizations, and any special medication needs.[109]

Such information provides a benchmark for the teacher. Once established, the student inventory can be passed along from grade to grade, or follow the child who moves to another school. The Forest Park Elementary School in St. Paul, Minnesota, recently began asking parents to list their child's interests and strengths, along with the parents' own goals for their child. The information is then used to develop a Parent-Student-Teacher Plan at the beginning of the year. The plan is helpful during parent conferences in monitoring how effectively goals are being met.

Covenant for Learning. Teachers and parents also may wish to enter into a "Covenant for Learning." We are not suggesting a formal contract. Rather, by "covenant" we mean having both parents and the school pledge to participate in the child's learning. Parents might agree, for example, to help the child get to school on time, read to the child, assist with homework, and attend parent-teacher conferences. The school, in turn, might pledge to have clear goals, evaluate carefully the child's progress, and communicate regularly with parents. "Every school should sit down with parents at the beginning of the school year," Pascal D. Forgione, Delaware's state school superintendent said. "Let's get parents involved in understanding the *criteria* and the *quality* of work at the very beginning."

Printed as a scroll or certificate, a "Covenant for Learning" could be signed as part of a "First Day of School" celebration.

Or it could be sent to parents before school, and then collected at the ceremonies on opening day. A covenant is a symbolic act. But if parents and schools would, together, make a pledge to serve children, the impact would be substantial. St. Ann's School in Somerville, Massachusetts, involves all families in a covenant with the school. Every student and parent, with the teacher, pledges to form a partnership for learning.

In Grandview, Missouri, parents pledge, in a learning covenant, to set aside at least twenty minutes each night to help their children with schoolwork. They agree, as well, to attend instructional lessons about the school's reading and math programs. In Reading, Ohio, a city-wide "covenant for learning" lists responsibilities not just for parents, but for the *entire* community. "All of this has served to focus on the value of education," says John Varis, Reading's superintendent. "What we have behind us now is the power of everyone in the community thinking about education."

Minneapolis, Minnesota, also introduced a citywide pledge. "The Minneapolis Covenant" includes everyone, from school board members to students. Students pledge to attend school regularly, ask for help, respect other students and adults, and keep the school safe. Parents pledge to help their children attend school on time, keep high expectations, communicate regularly with school staff, and provide quiet space for homework. School staff, in turn, promise, among other things, to set high expectations, respect cultural differences, and "show that I care about all students."[110]

Sustaining the Partnership

The Basic School partnership with parents is sustained throughout the year, with frequent informal conversations as well as periodic parent-teacher conferences. Research reveals

that close communication between parents and teachers leads to improved performance by the student. Currently, most parents of elementary school children in this country meet with teachers from one to three times a year, according to our survey[iii] (table 12). We recommend at least four formal parent-teacher meetings annually, with less formal communication in between.

Table 12

How Often During the Course of the Year Do You Have a Face-to-Face Discussion about Your Child's Weaknesses and Strengths with Your Child's Teacher

(Survey of Parents)

More than once a month	5%
About once a month	10
One to three times a year	79
Never	6

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Parents should feel that they will be warmly welcomed anytime. Centennial Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, sends home weekly homework packets for students in the early grades, and nightly booklets for students, in grades two to five. Teachers give their home phone numbers to parents, and the school publishes a monthly newsletter with helpful hints for learning and reading at home. Centennial also has an interpreter attend conferences for non-English-speaking parents.

At Westwood Elementary School in Santa Clara, California, a packet of information is sent home to parents every Wednesday, with progress reports, homework assignments, and work samples. "I look forward to Wednesday as my homework day," said one parent. "I spend two hours going through the three envelopes for my three children, but it is time well spent." Adds another parent: "I very much appreciate the large envelope that comes home each Wednesday. It's an easy way to communicate thoughts and opinions back to the teachers as well as receive input." Notes a third parent: "The envelope reminds students that parents know directly from the teacher what homework is expected. It makes shirking it a little harder! The weekly communication promotes an all-around unity for child, parent, and the school."[112]

We recognize that this close and continuing communication means intense work for teachers, adding even more responsibility to an already overburdened schedule. To provide support, Basic Schools may wish to use teacher aides, volunteers from the local university, senior citizens, parents, even high school students to help out. Teachers cannot do it all.

Reaching parents is not always easy, but it's worth the effort.

A Parent Place. The Basic School, ideally, also has a *Parent Place*, a comfortable location where parents are always welcomed and can mingle with staff or other parents.[113] In schools where space is tight, chairs positioned at the end of a quiet corridor, with a carpet perhaps, or a "parent corner" in the library would be a signal to parents that they are full members of the school "family." While visiting an elementary school in the West, we came across a "parent center" that housed, along with a coffee pot and some comfortable furniture, a library of

parenting books, tips on how to make a neighborhood walk educational for children, plus samples of new children's books. We think every school could create such a welcoming place for parents.

Parent Interest Inventory. Every parent group has talent, and a *Parent Interest Inventory* might be helpful to find out what kind of volunteer work parents wish to do. Orchard School in Ridgewood, New Jersey, put together an "Encyclopedia of People" that listed parents' interests. On any given day, mothers and fathers can be seen working in the library, giving classroom talks about their jobs, or serving as art consultants. Each summer, Orchard School parents work with art teacher Tom Wallace to produce a school calendar which features children's drawings. Parents recently spent weekends working side by side with the principal and teachers, raising money to build a new playground, obtaining the necessary permits.

At Dover Elementary School in Westlake, Ohio, parents run a Book Publishing Center, binding as many as one thousand books a month—books written and illustrated by the students. At Manhattan's Public School 111, parents established English courses for Spanish-speaking parents. At the Fairfax Elementary School in Cleveland, parents created a new play-and-learn facility on the school grounds, with a kindergarten play lot and nature study areas.

Again, employers can help build such connections. State Farm Insurance in Bloomington, Illinois, recently announced it would begin giving its sixty-seven thousand employees paid time off to volunteer in schools.[114] California recently passed a state initiative called "The Family-School Partnership Act" that allows parents to take off eight hours a month, or up to forty hours each school year, with employer support. "No single

factor can impact our children and our schools more positively than parent involvement," said Delaine Eastin, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction.[115]

Parent Coordinators. We urge, finally, that each Basic School have a *parent coordinator* to greet parents, organize parent education workshops, help teachers with voice-mail messages, operate homework hotlines, and arrange home visits. The coordinator could be a parent volunteer, a senior citizen, or a college student fulfilling a community service program. Lowery Elementary School in Houston, Texas, uses a parent coordinator to recruit and work with parent volunteers, with remarkable results. More than six hundred parents now work in twenty-six volunteer programs, logging 13,500 hours of service every year.

Whitcomb Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia, has a paid parent coordinator who schedules "Let's Talk" sessions every Thursday morning. There's a "Coffee with the Principal" meeting once a month.[116] At Public School 88 in Manhattan, the parent coordinator, serving on a half-time basis, conducts Tuesday evening discussion groups on subjects ranging from "whole language" instruction to home science projects.[117] "What's needed, many educators believe, is more extensive efforts to provide parents with parenting and educational skills, and to make them aware of their responsibilities as parents," said Keith Geiger, president, National Education Association. "Judging from the reactions of parents in the schools . . . that's precisely what parents want."[118]

Jackson-Keller Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas, is located in a neighborhood with a highly mobile population, surrounded by housing developments and apartments, with many single-parent families. A few years ago, parents were

not involved in the school. But the principal, Alicia Thomas, joined by teachers and the children, hosted "Donuts for Dads" and "Muffins for Moms" parties on Saturday mornings in the lobbies of apartments close by. Barriers were broken. Trust was built. Parents became partners. Teachers felt supported. Children were the winners.

The Basic School is, then, a community for learning, where parents complete the circle.

A Curriculum with Coherence

The Centrality of Language

> In the Basic School, literacy is the first and most essential goal. All children are expected to become proficient in the written and spoken word. But in the Basic School, language is defined broadly to include words, numbers, and the arts, the essential tools of learning which, taken together, help create a curriculum with coherence.

The Basic School, as a learning community, focuses first on language. Our sophisticated use of symbols sets human beings apart from all other forms of life, the porpoise and the bumblebee notwithstanding. Language is, as M.I.T. Professor Steven Pinker reminds us, "so tightly woven into human experience it is scarcely possible to imagine life without it."[119] No student can succeed without proficiency in the written and spoken word. Every student in the Basic School, to be educationally successful, must learn to read with understanding, write with clarity, and effectively speak and listen.

Language is, without question, central to all learning. But in the Basic School, language is defined broadly to include not just words, but also mathematics and the arts—three symbol

systems that have their own unique characteristics, and also relate intimately to each other. At first blush, it may seem odd to refer to mathematics and the arts as languages and to suggest that they are somehow connected. But consider for a moment how the pattern of grandmother's exquisite quilt is both geometric *and* aesthetic. Consider, too, how the rhythmic beat of music also involves measurement, how opera is a blend of song and speech, and how the magnificent double helix, which broke the genetic code, is not only rational, but beautiful as well.

Great scientists and poets, musicians and artists understand just how intimately words and mathematics and the arts—the essential tools of learning—relate to one another. For example, when the world-renowned scientist Victor Weisskopf was asked, "What gives you hope in troubled times?" he replied, "Mozart and quantum mechanics."[120] More recently, when Aleksandr Khazanov, a fifteen-year-old winner of a 1995 Westinghouse Science Talent Search, was asked why he stays awake late at night studying mathematics, he replied: "There was never a time in my life when I did not want to do math. It's the way you can apply a lot of connections to make very beautiful ideas, to obtain beautiful proofs."[121]

In the Basic School, students gain basic proficiency in the language of *words*, the language of ***numbers***,[122] and the language of *the arts*.[123] While these subjects may be taught separately, at times, students also discover that they are connected in compelling ways. Through words they explore mathematical equations. Through mathematics, they discover the aesthetic. Language in the Basic School is, indeed, a curriculum with coherence.

The Language of Words

Children encounter language before birth, as the unborn infant monitors the mother's voice. With the first breath of life, children become verbally expressive, beginning with cries and coos, then phonemes, followed by isolated words, culminating in two- and three-word sentences that so delight grownups.[124] Every parent knows the thrill that comes when a young child names an object, recognizes a face—and then gives it a name. In the early years, language quite literally explodes, and by the time a child heads off to school, he or she has, on average, a vocabulary of more than *three thousand words*.[125]

Students in the Basic School are encouraged to communicate, beginning first day of school. They ask questions, listen to poetry, sing together, describe their neighborhood, with lots of student-teacher interaction. Such active communication is already going on, in many elementary classrooms, according to our research. For example, 40 percent of the nine- to eleven-year-olds we surveyed in this country say their class spends a lot of time "discussing something together" or "working in groups," which they like to do the *most*. Still, 30 percent of these students also report spending a lot of time "listening to the teacher talk," which is one of the things they say they like to do the *least* (table 13).

Table 13

Which One of These Learning Activities
Is Happening Most Often in Your Classes and
Which One Do You Like Doing the Most?

(Survey of Students)

	HAPPENING MOST OFTEN	STUDENT PREFERENCE
Listening to the teacher talk	30%	6%
Discussing something together as a class	23	13
Students working on their own	19	14
Working in groups of students	14	47
Answering the teacher's questions	9	9
Listening to a student give a report	3	NA
Repeating aloud together what we need to remember	2	1
Giving an oral report to the class	NA	10

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

NA Not asked.

At an elementary school in the Southwest, the kindergarten teacher invited twenty-three students to join her on the carpet, first day of school. "I'm Mrs. Miller," she said quietly, "and the first thing we're going to do is get to know each other." She then told a brief story about how two bear cubs met along the road, how they introduced themselves, and explained how "we too become acquainted as we speak *and* listen." Several students stood up and proudly announced their names. Others

held back. Soon, however, everyone was engaged. The children were then shown a brightly painted stool called "The Talking Bench." It could be used, Mrs. Miller said, when "you have something very special to tell the class. And when someone is sitting on 'The Talking Bench,' let's all be very quiet, and *listen* carefully."

Speaking and listening come first. But *reading* is, without question, the top priority in elementary education. When we asked teachers about the most important school goals, without exception they said, "Teaching children to read." And the success of every elementary school is judged, ultimately, by the reading proficiency of its students. What's often forgotten, however, is that reading, just like speech, begins long before school. Even very young children "read" the signs and signals all around them. They become attentive to picture books and the printed page, something every parent should encourage. Reading expert Bernice E. Cullinan, of New York University, put it well: "Children who sit beside a reader and follow the print from an early age learn to read quite 'naturally.' We know," she said, "that the 'modeling' has a lasting effect: children do what they see others do."[126]

The teacher's task, then, is to build on the truly remarkable language skills children already have. Kristy McDaniel, a first-grade teacher in Texas, began the first day of school last fall by asking, "Who in this class knows how to read?" Faces fell, lips pressed shut. Ms. McDaniel switched on the slide projector and, using pictures of local signs, flashed a familiar image on the screen. "Who can 'read' this?" she asked. Recognizing the familiar red, eight-sided sign, a few children answered, "That's '*stop*.'" A green traffic light appeared. "Who can 'read' this?" "That means 'go,'" several children said. "Who knows what this one says?" "McDonald's!" cried the class. The teacher then asked, "Who can read?" Every hand shot up. On this, the

75

first day of school, the mystery of reading faded. The confidence of children soared.

Everyone agrees that all children should learn to read. But how to *teach* reading remains a perennial debate. Some advocate the phonics method. Others stress vocabulary. Today, a widely used approach is called "whole language."[127] In the Basic School, all of these approaches are embraced. Learning phonemes, the building blocks of language, surely is important. Helping students develop a rich vocabulary is essential, too. But in the end, reading in the richest, fullest sense occurs only as sounds and words are placed in larger context, when language takes on meaning.

"Reading for meaning is paramount," according to a report from New Zealand, considered to be the most literate nation in the world. ". . . Reading must always be rewarding. Children learn to read by reading. . . . The best approach to reading is a combination of approaches. The best cure for reading failure is good teaching." And, the report adds, "The foundations for literacy are laid in the early years."[128] This summarizes, quite nicely, the philosophy of reading in the Basic School.

Children learn in different ways. Therefore, the methods of reading instruction should be adapted to fit the child, not the other way around. Further, while Basic School students have special periods of concentrated study, they also read across the curriculum, with the entire day opened up to language study. Also, instead of restricting reading to basal textbooks and spelling workbooks, children read great literature such as *The Tales of Peter Rabbit*, *Treasure Island*, or *Robinson Crusoe*. They find stories that truly interest them and read to classmates what they, themselves, have written.

Writing is the other side of reading. More than any other form of communication, writing demands clarity of expression. It holds students responsible for their words,[129] while also freeing them to engage in a truly creative act. We discovered, however, that for far too many students, writing is a chore, not an act of creative self-expression.[130] Columbia University professor Lucy Calkins reminds us that, all too often, "Reading and writing are brought into a stupefying negative relationship to each other that makes students want to avoid both. . . . In our schools our students tell us they don't want to write. They need not bother to tell us. We can feel their apathy as they crank out stories that are barely adequate. We can hear their question, 'How long does it have to be?'"[131]

In the Basic School, writing is not copying words. It is not just penmanship, although well-formed letters are valued. Rather, writing in the Basic School is an art of both discipline and discovery, one that allows children to be wondrously self-expressive while teaching clear thinking, too. Writing is woven through the whole curriculum, from civics to natural science. Every day, children are expected to write, write, write. One third-grade teacher, who makes writing a part of every lesson, said: "Most of my students leave at the end of the year as good writers, active readers, creative thinkers."

Verbal literacy in the Basic School means proficiency in standard American English. English is, after all, the primary language of the culture,[132] and without such proficiency, a student's social and economic prospects are exceedingly diminished. At the same time, Basic School students are encouraged to become familiar with a second language. We find it distressing that, currently, only 5 percent of America's elementary schools provide foreign language instruction, and only 19 percent of elementary school teachers in this country believe that "a great deal of emphasis" should be given to a

second language, the lowest among the twelve countries polled. In contrast, more than 70 percent of the teachers in Germany say "a great deal of emphasis" should be given to a second language (table 14).[133]

Table 14

How Much Emphasis or Weight
Should Be Given to the Study of a Second Language
During the Years of Required Schooling?

(Survey of Teachers)

	PERCENTAGE RESPONDING "A GREAT DEAL OF EMPHASIS"
Germany	73%
Israel	72
Zimbabwe	67
Turkey	62
Russia	59
Mexico	55
Italy	52
Chile	45
China	42
Japan	26
Great Britain	21
UNITED STATES	19

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

The question is, of course, *which* language? We suggest Spanish.[134] Spanish is already the most frequently spoken second language in our schools. By the year 2000, the United States will be home to the world's fifth-largest Hispanic population.[135] Increasingly, our future as a nation is linked to our neighbors to the south. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that elementary schools offer Spanish. We recognize, however, that in some regions of the country, French or

German or another language may be the most appropriate. This is something every community should decide.

Regardless of the language chosen, we urge that foreign language instruction begin early, certainly by third grade, that it be offered daily, and also be continued through all the grades.[136] There are far too few foreign language teachers available today. Therefore, as a minimum, we urge that every Basic School introduce, throughout the curriculum, examples of words from many languages, teaching students about the wonderfully diverse ways people communicate with each other.

The Language of Numbers

The second essential language is mathematics, a universal language used to explore problems of quantity, space, and time. University of Chicago mathematician Zalman Usiskin puts it this way: "Previously, math was taught as almost a code—one that only the very bright or math-oriented students could decipher. Math is," he added, "language, in every sense of the word. It is a way of describing, relating, and solving the problems of everyday life."[137]

In the Basic School students learn fundamental mathematics—adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. They move on to higher order skills, such as analysis and problem-solving. Students learn to compute, measure, estimate, collect and organize data, and explore geometric patterns, discovering that mathematics can be used to understand the world around them.

Just as with words, children learn the language of mathematics very early. They show great curiosity about round pegs and square blocks long before school. Young children are

fascinated by different shapes and sizes and by how things fit together—or don't fit. Preschoolers begin to count things. They notice the symmetry of bridges, the shapes of buildings, and they sing songs about ten fingers and ten toes.[138]

The California Mathematics Curriculum Guide vividly describes how math enriches a child's world: "It is natural for children to seek order and beauty and consistency. From the very beginning of a child's life, he or she is searching to organize and understand the world. Children notice size and shape and position. They wonder how long, how big, how much. Mathematical thinking is that which helps us to make connections, to see order and logic. It is seeing patterns and making predictions."[139]

For many children this curiosity about mathematics quickly tapers off.[140] From what we observed in classrooms, it is easy to see why. We found young students spending lots of time filling in worksheets, expected to soak up facts, with little understanding of either the problems or underlying process. Good students received lots of attention, while "slow learners" often were engaged in endless drill. Further, lessons frequently are not linked to children's lives. Shirley Frye, former president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, put the problem this way: "Too often, when students ask why they'll need math, we answer that they'll need it for the next lesson or the next course."[141]

"Mathematics is not simply arithmetic procedures or algebraic formulas," reads the California Guide. "Mathematics is actually very much a part of life."[142] At the Santa Rita School in Los Altos, California, students use mathematics to estimate the resources used (and wasted) at the school. They draw maps to scale, regularly weigh and measure objects and chart results.

During science experiments, students draw graphs, and in physical education, they measure the distances in races, using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. In art, they study geometric designs. In this school, the language of numbers is everywhere.

We saw the beauty of mathematics in Kristin Sonquist's classroom at the Downtown Open School in Minneapolis. She teaches children origami as both art and geometry. At Goodwood Elementary School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, students learn to connect mathematics to life, working with Lego building blocks and a computer to master math concepts. They use bottle caps, straws, toothpicks, "anything to give our students a hands-on experience," says Brenda Sterling, principal. First-graders learn graphing and estimation by charting the weather each month. Looking at a graph, the children compare the numbers of sunny and overcast days, learning about *less* and *more*. Students track birthdays and lost teeth, learning about probability and statistics.

In the Basic School, children discover mathematics as a language of both order and beauty, one that is woven throughout the curriculum, touching every subject. Students learn to compute, measure, estimate, collect and organize data, explore geometric patterns as they solve problems that they themselves propose. "For elementary school graduates, knowing and doing in mathematics should be inseparable from each other,"[143] declares the Council for Basic Education. One might also add, *enjoying*.

The Language of Art

Art is yet another universal language. Perhaps our most evocative form of human expression, the arts help build community, even in our schools. They give rise to many

voices, making it possible for people who are socially, economically, and ethically divided to begin to understand one another at a deeper, more authentic level. Through singing and painting and dancing it is possible for people of different backgrounds to communicate powerfully their feelings and ideas.

The arts are especially appealing to children. A sense of imagery is with us from birth, and youngsters, responding to their deep urge, paint with their fingers, dance to the beat of drums, sing simple melodies, make sculptures from modeling clay. For young children, art is *not* a frill, it is an essential language that makes it possible to communicate feelings and ideas words cannot express. "Artists speak to us in a language that carries meaning that cannot be conveyed through words," says Elliot W. Eisner, a Stanford University professor.

For the most intimate, most intense, and most deeply moving experiences, people of all ages have, throughout the years, turned to art. Therefore, we find it deeply distressing that, in many schools, art is still considered to be an "extra," the last subject to come and the first to go. Further, many teachers do not feel comfortable teaching art. And while most elementary teachers believe that "language arts" and mathematics should receive "a great deal of emphasis," only 25 percent say that art should be emphasized in school, according to our survey (table 15).[44]

Table 15

Percentage of Teachers Agreeing That
"A Great Deal of Emphasis" Should Be
Given to Each of the Following Subjects:

	Basic Language Skills	Mathematics	The Arts
Great Britain	98%	91%	17%
Zimbabwe	98	90	63
Germany	94	50	22
Russia	94	67	51
Chile	94	76	66
United States	90	93	25
Japan	90	47	24
Israel	90	85	42
Turkey	89	75	48
China	82	81	12
Mexico	79	89	49
Italy	52	66	24

Source: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute. The International Schooling Project, 1994.

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner reminds us that a child's potential includes what he calls "visual and musical intelligence."[145] Further, there is growing evidence that the various dimensions of intelligence reinforce each other. Research at New York University, for example, revealed that critical thinking skills in the arts are transferred to other subjects,[146] which is something Ann Alejandro, a classroom teacher in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, observes in her classroom everyday: "I am convinced of the parallels between teaching children how to draw and teaching them how to read and write. In all cases, students need to learn *how to see*, to interpret data from the word, the canvas, and the page."[147]

In the Basic School, singing, painting, and rhythm are woven into the fabric of the whole curriculum. Art is taught in every subject. Even if Basic School teachers are not "master art teachers," they can feel confident in introducing art experiences in each lesson. Jane Alexander, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, states that, "Art is a great tool for developing our intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic tastes and capacities."[148]

Further, each Basic School student also has a musical instrument, beyond the human voice, and plays melodies each day. We suggest a recorder, a simple, inexpensive, yet beautiful instrument which every child, and every teacher, can learn to play. In the upper grades, students may wish to select their own special instrument—a trumpet, or violin, or drums.

Children also experience art through dance. Jacques D'Amboise, the internationally renowned dancer and founder of the National Dance Institute, notes that dance is a language all its own, one that builds confidence and intelligence in children. Much of dance embraces the language of mathematics, for example, as students study choreographic patterns. "Dance is the most immediate and accessible of the arts because it involves your own body," D'Amboise concludes. "And by learning to be expressive through dance, young students are, quite literally, taking control of their own lives."[149]

At Brumfield Elementary School in rural Princeton, Indiana, art is woven into all aspects of school life. It's integrated into thematic lesson plans on animal life, history and the traditions in other countries. Students design sets for school plays and musicals. Every child has art work displayed. Local residents offer workshops on weaving, painting, wood carving, and folk

music. Students receive instruction in recorders, autoharp, rhythm instruments, as well as vocal music. Artists-in-residence offer workshops on story-building, and writing folktales. Recent visitors included a jazz guitarist, a synthesizer specialist, a puppet production company, a square-dance group, and a folk group. At Brumfield, art is an essential language.

Lewis Thomas wrote on one occasion, childhood is for language.[150] The first goal of the Basic School is literacy for all. The aim is, for all children, to be successful not just in reading, writing, and mathematics, but also in the universal language we call art. In the end, language study in the Basic School is not just another subject. Rather, it is the means by which all other subjects are explored.

The Core Commonalities

In the Basic School, all students become well informed. They study, with diligence, the various fields of knowledge, which are organized, thematically, within a framework called the "Core Commonalities." These eight commonalities, based on shared human experiences, integrate the traditional subjects, helping students see connections across the disciplines and relate what they learn to life.

Children come to school to learn. This is, after all, why schools exist, to help students gain proficiency in language, extend their knowledge, and become active, well-motivated learners. In the Basic School, all students become well informed. They learn to solve problems. They learn to *think*. But beyond acquiring a core of essential knowledge, they also learn to make connections across the separate academic subjects, and relate what they study in the classroom to their own lives. For these goals to be accomplished, some agreement surely must be reached about what students should know and be able to do. Just what knowledge *is* worth knowing? What exactly *should* the elementary school curriculum include?

Once, teachers and parents felt they knew what "core of knowledge" should be passed along from one generation to the next. Today, no such confidence exists. Everyone agrees that children should learn to read, write, and compute, and the majority of instructional time in most elementary schools is devoted to "the basics." But beyond teaching language skills—and perhaps some science and social studies—we found, in our study of curriculum guides, little agreement about what the course of study should include. One teacher described the problem this way: "The curriculum at our school seems forever blurred. Everyone has a separate priority and then, when a new social or political crisis hits, some new topic is tacked on. The list keeps growing, but there seems to be no plan."

When children first come to school, they are filled with curiosity about the world. They keep asking, *why?*, searching for the hidden threads that link all subjects. But soon this curiosity is deadened. Failing to get answers to their questions, young students stop asking *why?* and, somewhere around grade four, begin to ask, "Will we have this on the test?" "What happens," philosopher Mortimer Adler asks, "between the nursery and college to turn the flow of questions off; or, rather, to turn it into the duller channels of adult curiosity about matters of fact?"[151]

Creative teachers, dissatisfied with fragments, often design integrated units of study on such themes as "Space Travel," "The Rain Forest," "Immigrants," and the like. This is surely helpful. The problem is that while connections may occur *within* each unit, somehow the lesson plans never seem to fit together, especially in the minds of children. Here's what one third-grade teacher said: "I feel really good about the

integrated units in social studies I've put together for the year. But, frankly, I still don't see how they relate to an overall plan. Each unit simply stands alone."

An educational approach that lacks unity will reveal nothing to students of the mystery and majesty of the world, nor will it touch the child's deepest self. Education is not something to be doled out in fragments, in arbitrary fifty-minute periods. Whatever the child learns is not just for the moment, to be recalled, and then discarded. What is urgently needed is perspective. British philosopher Lionel Elvin reminds us: "When you are out walking, nature does not confront you for three-quarters of an hour only with flowers and in the next only with animals."[152] All parts of the natural world are blended in a majestic, inspiring way. So is a good curriculum.

Students must, of course, acquire a core of knowledge. There *is* content to be learned. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, reminds us that "Children are not born with disciplinary knowledge. If the schools are failing our students, it is because we are satisfied with the shallow kind of knowledge that comes from insufficient grounding in the basic disciplines."[153] And again, every student in the Basic School is to become well informed.

Still, studies on the workings of the human mind confirm this essential truth: Children learn best when they see relationships across the disciplines, when they see connections. In a comprehensive review of neuroscience research, Geoffrey and Renate Caine conclude: "In learning, the brain is . . . constantly synthesizing things, organizing knowledge, and processing parts of information into a whole . . . ,"[154] which is something elementary school teachers understand very well.[155] When we asked teachers across the country if they thought the

curriculum is best taught as "separate" or as "integrated" subjects, nine out of ten supported the integrated approach (table 16).[156] One teacher said: "I'm not interested in presenting isolated facts which students seem to memorize and forget. I want to help students put each lesson in perspective."

Table 16

Which Is Closer to Your View of How to Present the Curriculum Most Effectively?

(Survey of Teachers)

	PERCENTAGE AGREEING
Integrate subjects	89%
Teach each subject separately	11

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Still, the curriculum in most elementary schools is disturbingly disconnected. Students study separate subjects. They pick up isolated facts, bits of knowledge, and eventually may be handed a diploma. But what they fail to gain is a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated, more authentic view of life. Further, state and district guidelines keep changing, and teachers, isolated in their classrooms, often do not know what colleagues down the hall are teaching. Educator Heidi Hayes Jacobs likes to tell the story of the small, suburban school where four different teachers, in four different grade levels, were unaware that they were all teaching *Charlotte's Web*.[157]

Clearly, what's needed in every elementary school is a curriculum with coherence, one that helps students see

relationships and patterns. But how is this to be accomplished? Is it possible to organize what we teach in school in a way that is both *comprehensive* and *coherent*?

The Basic School presents not so much a new *curriculum* as a new way to *think* about the curriculum. Rather than a laundry list of separate subjects or isolated units, what we propose to do is take the traditional subjects, along with other important topics to be studied, and organize them *thematically* around eight integrative themes called "the Core Commonalities." By Core Commonalities we mean those universal human experiences that are shared by all people, those essential conditions that give meaning to our lives. We have named these: *The Life Cycle*, *The Use of Symbols*, *Response to the Aesthetic*, *Membership in Groups*, *A Sense of Time and Space*, *Producing and Consuming*, *Connections to Nature*, and *Living with Purpose*.

In the new Core Commonalities curriculum, all of the traditional subject matter is covered. Basic School students learn important content in science, history, civics, literature, and the rest. But by focusing on common *human* experiences, children not only acquire a core of knowledge, they also discover relationships across the separate subjects and begin to see how what they study in the classroom actually relates to *them*, to their own lives. Further, students learn that the eight commonalities we all share are, in fact, lived out in very different ways, from one culture to another.

Each of the Core Commonalities themes has its own curriculum framework. But the content to be studied is woven together into integrative themes, which spiral upward, with increasing complexity, from one grade level to the next. Recently in the Milford School District in Delaware, the Core

Commonalities curriculum has been adopted for all schools, kindergarten through grade twelve. Charles Moses, the district superintendent, explained the move by saying: "Not only do the Core Commonalities include the disciplines, they connect them, and also allow us to meet all the statewide curriculum requirements in a more thoughtful way."

What follows, then, is a brief sketch, not a fully developed description, of what each of the eight commonalities might include. In each commonality, however, we start with children, with their simplest questions. The course of study then moves upward through all six years of the Basic School, expanding knowledge and gaining insights, with students always meeting high academic standards. Thus, in the Core Commonalities curriculum, students explore a rich *content*, but in larger *context*.

The Life Cycle

All people share the sacredness of life. And at the very core of the Basic School curriculum is a study of *The Life Cycle*. This commonality, which draws upon such traditional subjects as health, nutrition, hygiene, and physical education, enables students to learn about the human body, growth and development, and good health habits, and, above all, to gain a respect for the miracle of life. The Life Cycle, like the other commonalities, spirals upward, from kindergarten to grade five—moving from the simple to the more complex.

Children are endlessly curious about life. They are always asking questions: "Why can't babies talk?" "What's inside an egg?" "Why is my mother sick?" "Why do plants need water?" "How do I grow?" "Why do people die?" This curiosity, this steady flow of questions, should be responded to sensitively, respecting the readiness level of the child. Yet, all

too often, important questions about life go unanswered, and students leave school often knowing more about their Walkmans and VCRs than they do about the miracles of their own bodies.

In his book *Joys and Sorrows*, cellist Pablo Casals spoke eloquently about what we should teach our children when they inquire about themselves. "We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all of the world there is no other child exactly like you. In the millions of years that have passed there has never been another child like you. And look at your body—what a wonder it is! Your legs, your arms, your cunning fingers, the way you move! . . . Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel? You must cherish one another."[158]

Young children begin the study of The Life Cycle by observing animal life, gerbils perhaps or baby chicks. They consider how animal young enter the world, learn about eggs set afloat in the ocean, and examine nests warmed by a mother bird. They watch trees change through the seasons, and write stories about pets. Later, students begin to study their own bodies, the benefits of exercise, and how our bodies are nourished. They learn, too, about the damage done by tobacco, alcohol, and certain drugs.

Basic School students, while studying The Life Cycle, make connections across the generations. Mothers with infants or toddlers visit school, so young children can observe firsthand the wondrous changes that occur in the early stages of life. Students visit retirement villages, too, inviting senior citizens, sometimes grandparents, to serve as mentors, learning lessons that span the generations.

At the completion of this study, students will have discovered that the cycle of life is, indeed, something we all share. They will have learned, at a basic level, how the body functions and how to stay healthy. They will see the cycle of life around them, in nature, how it differs in other cultures, and, above all, begin to appreciate the sacredness of their own lives, and the lives of others.

THE USE OF SYMBOLS

After life, comes language. We all use symbols. And this second commonality, *The Use of Symbols*, introduces students to the miracle of words, not just as a basic skill, but as a "system of symbols." Most elementary students are often taught only the *techniques* of language. They study language as a tool, learning grammar, parts of speech, how to spell, and how to write a sentence or a paragraph. Rarely are they asked to step back and reflect upon the process itself, to consider language as a social function, and how it connects people to each other. This is so important, yet it's hardly ever taught.

In this commonality, children begin to put language in social, historical and ethical perspective. They explore, through all six grades, such questions as, "How did I learn to speak?" "When did writing begin?" "What symbols did people use long ago?" "How many languages are there?" "How do I know if someone is telling the truth?" "Do languages change?" "Is what I see on TV real?"

The Use of Symbols introduces students to the history of language. They learn how people first made paper long ago, sent messages, used drumbeats or smoke signals, and drew pictures on the walls of caves. They begin to think about how other forms of life—birds, dolphins, bumble bees—send

signals to each other. Students also consider the many ways they, themselves, communicate using words or facial expressions or body language. And they study the logos, signs, and symbols in their own neighborhoods.

Older students learn that we communicate for different reasons: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, and to inspire. They consider how words can hurt, as well as heal. Students begin to see how rich and varied language is, and how languages vary from one region or culture to another. Students learn about dialects and discover colloquial expressions, and examine, as well, the variety of languages spoken by the ancestors of students in their own classroom.

Before leaving the Basic School, students are introduced to mass communication. They consider how television, movies, and musical recordings influence their own lives, and begin to make discriminating judgments. By the end of their study, Basic School students not only learn to *use* words, they learn to *think* about them. They are introduced to the *history* of language, the *social significance* of language, and the *ethics* of language. Above all, students learn that language is a sacred trust, and that honesty is the obligation we assume when we are empowered with words.

Response to the Aesthetic

There is something deep within the human spirit that is stirred by beauty. It's a universal experience we all share. Conductor Murray Sidlin put it this way: "When words are no longer adequate, when our passion is greater than we are able to express in a usual manner, people turn to art. Some people go to the canvas and paint, some stand up and dance. But we all go beyond our normal means of communicating and *this* is the common human experience for all people on this planet."[159]

Response to the Aesthetic goes beyond art as a basic *tool*, and introduces students to the formal study of art. It responds to such questions as: "Is it all right to color outside the lines?" "Why do musical instruments make different sounds?" "What's a poem?" "Why does the artist paint that way?" Students discover that art is a profoundly significant human experience woven through history and across cultures. They begin to understand how art shapes our lives.

Basic School students begin their study of this commonality by looking at the beauty all around them—the shape of buildings, the setting of the sun. They watch artists work and talk about their own art. Students look at famous paintings, comparing form and color. They learn to *make* music and also learn *about* music, listening to musical performances and observing fingers strum on strings or on a keyboard.[160]

After listening to a performance by the high school orchestra, Basic School students may be taken on a "symphony safari," walking through the various sections of the orchestra, listening to the violins, touching the flutes and drums, learning the names of instruments, and what "percussion" means. Students listen to folk music and consider how musical instruments differ from culture to culture.

Students also are introduced, at a basic level, to the world of dance, its history and the various dance forms. They put on plays and learn to place drama in larger context. In a play about Helen Keller, for example, students might talk about deafness and how the play portrays what it is like to be blind. It presents history and dramatizes growing up in the South in the late 1800s.

In summary, Response to the Aesthetic introduces young students to a formal study of the arts. Children, through this commonality, begin to understand and respond to aesthetics—to music, dance, theater, and the visual arts—and see how they are woven through history. Above all, students begin to understand that "beauty," in all its forms, enables people to be truly self-expressive, a quality that is not just desirable, but essential, if we are to survive with civility and with joy.

Membership in Groups

We all hold membership in groups. It's an experience we all share. Everyone, from the first to the last moment of their lives, is shaped by groups and will, in turn, help shape them. Nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson observed: ". . . we do not make a world of our own, but rather fall into institutions already made and have to accommodate ourselves to them."[161]

In the study of the commonality *Membership in Groups*, students might consider: "Do animals have families?" "Which groups did I join at birth?" "Which groups do I belong to?" "Why do people join groups?" "Can I leave a group?" "Why are groups important?" "Does the group make me do things I don't want to do?" "How do groups help my life?" "What does it mean to be a citizen?"

Membership in Groups focuses first on the *family*, described by historian Will Durant as the nucleus of civilization.[162] Students discover the importance of the family unit in society and in their own lives. They consider, too, the informal groups of which they are a part—the clubs, even cliques, that are organized in neighborhoods and on playgrounds. Students also begin to think about the significant role of community groups,

about service clubs, and religious institutions. They ask: "Why do people come together in these ways?" "How do groups help our community?" They also study the school itself, the institution in which they all hold membership, and ask: "How does it work?" "How many groups are there within our school?"

At the start of each school year, students list the groups they belong to, and discuss them throughout the year. They might keep an inventory of their social relationships as they move along and consider, too, the ways various groups affect them. Older students might study one group in their own neighborhood. How did it begin? Who's in charge? What's its purpose?

Students in the upper grades begin the study of *civics*. They learn how government functions in their own community and at the national level, and are introduced to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

This commonality, like all the others, spirals upward, beginning with simple lessons about groups and membership, and ending with a more deeply rooted understanding of how and why people come together.

By the end of their study, students see themselves as holding membership in a variety of groups, beginning with the family. They begin to understand how groups are formed, learn about groups locally and nationally, and gain respect for democratic traditions. They are challenged to be a good citizen in their school and beyond, understanding that membership in a group means having responsibilities, as well as rights.

A Sense of Time and Space

As a condition of being human, everyone has the truly awesome capacity to recall the past, anticipate the future, and orient themselves spatially as well. In the study of this commonality—*A Sense of Time and Space*—children begin to put the human experience, and their own lives, in perspective.

With A Sense of Time, we all are able to look in both directions—recalling the past and anticipating the future. T. S. Eliot put it this way: "Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future is contained in time past."[163] Through a study of history, in particular, with an introduction to archeology, students seek answers to a host of questions: "How many grandparents and great-grandparents do I have?" "Will I ride in a spaceship sometime?" "What country did my family come from?" "When did they leave?" "How did America begin?" "How far back does time go?" "How can we really know what happened in the past?" "When did the dinosaurs live?" "What will life be like for my grandchildren?"

Young children begin their journey through time by thinking about their own histories, creating a family tree perhaps. They imagine what it would be like to live in the time of their grandparents. They recreate the past—bake bread, make candles, dress in period costumes. Young students also talk with older people about what life was like "long ago," and celebrate the rich heritage of family traditions in their own classroom. They learn about how their school got started and when the community where they live was settled.

Older students study the history of their home state and region, as well as the history of the United States. They research regional folklore and the cultural contributions of various

groups in their area. They read biographies of native peoples, of explorers, of pioneers, and learn about local leaders and national leaders who shaped our nation. The Sense of Time also extends into the future, and students are asked to think about what life may be like for their grandchildren. They create time capsules and consider how decisions made today will help shape the future, for themselves and for their children.

In the Sense of Space study, which includes geography and astronomy, students look around them and ask: "How deep is the ocean?" "How far is it to the nearest star?" "How does the sun know to come up?" "Where do rivers begin?" "Why are mountains so high?" "What is a comet?"

In this commonality, children study maps and use globes. They identify local landmarks, locate themselves in their own neighborhood, learn about the earth's oceans, major mountain ranges, continents, great rivers, and deserts. Students also study stars and the planets, and travel—with telescopes and computers—to galaxies beyond. Older students examine the solar system, study flight and space travel, turning classrooms into "space stations."

At the completion of this study, students have a basic core of knowledge about the history of the United States and the region where they live. They know something about geography and astronomy. They understand how we all recall the past, anticipate the future, and place ourselves in space. Above all, students begin to feel a part of the continuum of time, and marvel at the majesty of the universe of which they are a part.

PRODUCING AND CONSUMING

Work is universal. All human beings, sometime in their lives, participate in producing and consuming. It's something we all do. In this commonality, *Producing and Consuming*, students begin to learn about the basics of economics, various kinds of careers, the world of work, how products are made, and the importance of not wasting things. They begin by asking, "Where do grownups go off to every morning?" "How is a car made?" "Where does money come from?" "How does food get to the store?" "How do people start a business?"

In the study of Producing and Consuming, children learn, first, how to make things. Every child becomes familiar with at least one handicraft. They knit a scarf, make wooden bookends, care for a garden, learning the difficulty and the satisfaction of actually producing something from beginning to end. Young students learn about work from adults who visit the school, and they may also visit the work places of their parents, or work places in their own neighborhoods—traveling to art supply houses, paint shops and supermarkets.

Older students learn about how work has changed throughout the years, why most people today live in cities, rather than on farms. They consider why the self-sufficient farm community, idealized in such books as Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, no longer characterizes life for most of us today.

Students learn about U.S. currency and, at a basic level, about the exchange of goods and services. Students may create a business—run a "bank" in their classroom, open a school bookstore, or design a recycling plan for their school. In career studies, older students also might study a single career—electrical engineering, postal work, architecture,

plumbing, the practice of law, or computer programming—sharing what they learn with the class. Students also look at how work, which varies from one culture to another, is affected profoundly by the climate and resources of a region. Again, none of this is learned at once. It spirals upward through the six years of the Basic School.

By the end of the Basic School, students begin to learn that life, for all of us, involves producing and consuming. They discover the importance and dignity of work, begin to distinguish wants from needs, and understand the importance of carefully using the precious resources on our earth, becoming responsible producers, consumers, and conservers.

Connections to Nature

We are all connected to the natural world. The scientist and essayist Lewis Thomas said: "There are no solitary, free-living creatures: Every form of life is dependent on other forms. . . ." And this commonality, *Connections to Nature*, responds to questions such as: "Why is the sky blue?" "Where do rivers go?" "Why does a plant grow up?" "What is a rainbow?" "Where do birds go in the winter?" "Why does it rain?" "Why is the sun hot?" "What does 'science' mean?" And in the study of this commonality—which draws upon such subjects as biology, botany, zoology, geology—students learn about the physical world around them. They begin to understand how plants, animals, and humans relate to the natural environment and how through science we learn how nature works.

Children are natural observers. They look carefully at trees, shrubs, water, and rocks. They study a flock of pigeons finding shelter in the half-hidden gargoyles of the stone church across the street. They watch the family of sparrows weaving a nest in the concavity of the alarm bell at the firehouse next

door. They observe carefully as an army of ants marches across the city sidewalk, and learn about nature's division of labor and the recycling of waste. These observations give children wonderful science lessons about adaptability and survival. "All understanding begins with wonder," said the poet and scientist Goethe.[164]

Basic School students, while visiting the city park or hiking on a trail, can select rocks of special interest, identify trees, or study insects and wildflowers. And every classroom in the school includes a garden space so children can study closely, over time, the growth of plants.

Older students learn about scientists and inventors. They write about the lives of great scientists and discuss the issues they hear in the news—acid rain, the tropical rain forest, the Clean Air Act. Students begin, themselves, to use the scientific method, perhaps by setting up a weather station to track climate changes or by conducting experiments that test the growing rates of fungi or plant life.

After completing this commonality, Basic School students will have acquired a basic knowledge about the natural world. They will know, at a beginning level, the steps of scientific discovery, and will have begun to understand how we are all connected to the natural world. Above all, students will have discovered more of the beauty and wonder of the world around them and feel respect, even reverence, for it.

Living with Purpose

Everyone seeks fulfillment. We all want meaning in our lives. And the eighth commonality, *Living with Purpose*, brings together topics from many subjects, ethics, philosophy, sociology, and religion for young students. It includes a study

of heroes in history, lessons on the value of vocation, and experience in the significance of service. Reinhold Niebuhr said it best: "Man . . . cannot be whole except he be committed, he cannot find himself without finding a purpose beyond himself."[165]

In this commonality—Living with Purpose—responds to questions such as these: "What makes people happy?" "What's wrong with being mean?" "Are big league ballplayers really heroes?" "Why should I help somebody?" "Are some people better than others?"

Today, many children grow up without a deeply rooted sense of purpose. They feel unneeded, disconnected from the larger world, with few heroes. Many do not feel challenged or inspired. In this study, Living with Purpose, Basic School children are asked to think about people they admire, write about them, and tell why they respect them. They choose heroes in history, as well as those in their own neighborhood, who might visit the classroom to talk about their own goals and about what has brought meaning to their life.

Students, while reading classical literature, discuss how great scientists, artists, and religious leaders lived their daily lives with purpose. They consider, too, how various vocations enrich life, leading to fulfillment, discussing what Benjamin Franklin meant when he wrote in *Poor Richard's Almanac*: "The noblest question in the world is, 'What good may I do in it?'"

Finally, Basic School students are encouraged to participate in service. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "Everyone can be great because everyone can serve." And beginning with simple chores at home, at school, and in the neighborhood, students

learn that life takes on meaning as we reach out to others. Professor William Damon, of Brown University, puts the challenge this way: "Without learning an obligation to serve and respect others, children cannot develop a sense of social responsibility . . . this is the gravest danger in societies that have lost touch with the need to foster in their children an obligation to serve others."[166]

By the time they move on to middle school, students will have learned that Living with Purpose is a universal urge, something we all share. They discover that having honorable goals that are diligently pursued and that reaching out to others can assure a life of purpose.

What we've presented in this chapter is a new way to organize the curriculum in the elementary school. Through a study of eight Core Commonalities, students become well informed, become knowledgeable in all the subjects now being taught, "culturally literate" to use E. D. Hirsch's helpful formula.[167]

But it would be a big mistake to view the Core Commonalities curriculum as simply a convenient way to repackage the disciplines, giving the old structure new labels. Rather, students discover how the separate subjects are connected and, above all, begin to understand, at a very basic level, these fundamental truths:

- we all share the sacredness of life,
- we all send messages to each other,
- we all respond to the aesthetic,
- we all place ourselves in time and space,
- we all belong to groups and institutions,
- we're all engaged in producing and consuming,
- we're all inseparably a part of nature,
- and we all seek to live with purpose.

More than fifty years ago Mark Van Doren wrote: "The connectedness of things is what the educator contemplates to the limit of his capacity. . . . The student who can begin early in his life to think of things as connected . . . has begun the life of learning."[168] The connectedness of things is, in the end, what the Basic School curriculum is all about.

Measuring Results

> Assessment in the Basic School is, always, in the service of learning. Academic standards are established both in language and the Core Commonalities, with benchmarks to monitor student achievement. The personal and social qualities of student development also are evaluated carefully by teachers. The Basic School is, in the end, accountable to students, to parents, and to the larger community.

The Basic School is an accountable institution, accountable to parents, to students, to itself, and, ultimately, to the larger community. It is unacceptable for children to go to school, month after month, without some understanding of what they have learned and what they need to know. Those who fund education also have a legitimate interest in knowing that learning has occurred. "Standards and assessment represent a cornerstone of education reform," said educator and historian Diane Ravitch. "Without them, it's very difficult to have a sense of what you're trying to accomplish."[169]

In the Basic School, assessment is linked directly to instruction. Every effort is made to assure that what is

measured flows from what is taught, and that evidence is gathered from a variety of sources. Most important, the results of evaluation are used not simply to make numerical comparisons, but to improve the educational experience for each student. The issue, therefore, is not whether to evaluate students, but, rather, how to measure their performance in ways that will enrich learning, rather than restrict it.

SETTING THE STANDARDS

The Basic School has standards. It has assessment. These are based on five major goals: language proficiency, core knowledge, and three goals having to do with the personal and social qualities of students. All of these goals require appropriate, sensitive evaluation. Basic Schools participate, of course, in district or state assessment programs with full confidence in the ability of their students to achieve. But such participation is always in the service of learning—to inform students, improve instruction, and shape better school policies and pedagogical procedures.

Measuring Literacy. The first goal of the Basic School is *proficiency in language*—in English, mathematics, and the arts. Therefore, evaluation focuses, initially, on basic skills. The school must know that each student is becoming linguistically empowered. And for this to be accomplished, each Basic School must develop goals for all three forms of language—verbal literacy, mathematics, and the arts. The following illustrate what we have in mind:

- In *verbal literacy*, each student develops skills and confidence in the use of spoken and written language, becomes capable of sending a variety of messages with clarity and effectiveness, and

receiving messages with understanding and discernment.

- In *mathematical literacy*, each student develops skills and confidence in the use of numbers, understanding and applying mathematical concepts with accuracy, solving problems, and appreciating the aesthetic characteristics of mathematics.

- In *artistic literacy*, each student develops skills and confidence in the language of the arts, learning to look and listen with sensitivity and intelligence, and, at a basic level, to be self-expressive in music, drama, dance, and the visual arts.

Having established goals, the next step is to define *achievement standards*, as well as *benchmarks*, for all forms of literacy. Basic Schools may define their own, or use district or state-mandated standards. Or they may adopt the voluntary standards being developed nationwide. Regardless of the standards used, each Basic School monitors, with regularity, the increments of student progress in achieving literacy over the course of six years.

Measuring Core Knowledge. The second goal of the Basic School is to help each student acquire a core of essential knowledge, using a curriculum which is organized around the eight integrative themes called the Core Commonalities. What we envision are goals for each commonality. While studying the Life Cycle, for example, children begin to recognize the patterns of growth in different plants and animals. They learn how life is nurtured and sustained. In Connections to Nature,

students learn about the natural world, how all life forms relate to each other, and how we learn more about nature through careful scientific investigation.

Each commonality also has its own achievement standards, along with more detailed benchmarks, based on the content to be studied. Ongoing assessment of the Core Commonalities is embedded in each lesson plan, not in outside tests.

At the end of the fourth grade, the Basic School introduces a *summative* assessment, a more formal evaluation that reveals what has been learned in the Core Commonalities during the first years of study. This summative evaluation measures student knowledge and understanding on several levels. It measures the students' grasp of content in the traditional academic fields, such as history and science. It also measures the ability of students to integrate what they have learned, and their ability to relate classroom instruction to real-life issues.

"The primary reason for formal assessment tasks," states the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation, "is to find out what each child knows and can do in a specific content area on a certain date."[170] Such tests can provide a useful picture of progress and enable teachers to match learning experiences to individual needs. They add another dimension to understanding the child.[171] Grant Wiggins captured the spirit of this approach when he said, "Good teaching is inseparable from good assessing."

Measuring Personal Growth. In addition to literacy and general knowledge, the Basic School has three other goals: helping students to be well motivated, to feel a sense of well being, and to live responsibly. These goals are important, but they are not "measured" formally in the Basic School, for two

reasons: First, we simply do not have good ways to evaluate, objectively, these personal and social qualities in children, as important as they are. For example, it is difficult to establish quantitative benchmarks to assess "motivation." Second, to measure *one* of these personal characteristics, in isolation, ignores the fact that social and emotional and ethical qualities can only be judged when "the whole child" is considered.

While formal assessment in the Basic School focuses on *academic* goals—on literacy and general knowledge—teachers are, of course, continuously observing and evaluating the personal and social characteristics of students, encouraging them, by word and example, to move toward higher standards of behavior in matters of life and conduct. In the end, the aim of assessment in the Basic School is to assure that all five goals—literacy, general knowledge, high motivation, a sense of well being, and responsible living—have been satisfactorily met by students.

Gathering the Evidence

In the Basic School, evidence regarding student performance is gathered from a variety of sources. For teachers, the issue is how to assemble it, evaluate it, and communicate the results to students and parents. To help address these issues, the Basic School keeps a portfolio for each child.

A "portfolio" is, in itself, not a way to assess students. Rather, it's a place to put a variety of things—a reminder that when it comes to assessing students, evidence can and should be gathered from many places. A growing number of schools throughout the country are using portfolios. In one elementary school we visited, the local supermarket had donated six hundred empty new boxes, one for each student. These were

used as the place to put student assessment materials. The school called it the "Pizza Box Assessment Plan."

Regardless of the name or the container, what's important to remember is that, in student evaluation, a broad range of evidence should be used. Further, the sampling of student work should be gathered over time. Above all, the portfolio approach is not simply to gather the student work together. Rather, it is to discover whether students have, in fact, moved along successfully, meeting the literacy and general knowledge standards of the Basic School.

At the Irving Weber Elementary School in Iowa City, Iowa, for example, fourth-graders took paper and pencil tests to measure their knowledge of a rain forest, an integrated unit related to Connections to Nature. Through multiple-choice questions, essays, and fill-in-the-blank answers, students were evaluated on their knowledge of the rain forest and this included the content found in the different disciplines—geography, science, and history. But evaluation was also based on work creating a nine- by twenty-foot rain forest mural with three-dimensional paper monkeys, beetles, spiders, colorful birds, broad-leafed vegetation, all scaled to size. Work on the mural demonstrated mathematical and artistic skills, as well as knowledge of the rain forest's ecosystem. Assessment at Irving Weber is embedded and broad-based, rather than restrictive.

In the Basic School, evidence used to evaluate students comes from a variety of sources. It is gathered from written examinations, teacher observations, students' products and performances, and parent information.

First, written examinations. Assessment in the Basic School includes written examinations. From time to time, students are

given carefully constructed questions to answer or problems to solve. By answering multiple-choice and other short-answer questions, the student can reveal knowledge of a subject, and discrete skills, as well as an understanding of basic concepts and ideas. Such assessments are used especially to measure student achievement in English and mathematics. Assessing proficiency in the arts is a more difficult task.

Harvard professor Howard Gardner, in his significant work, *Frames of Mind*, reminds us that students have many different kinds of intelligence. Beyond linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical skills, students also have bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, and musical intelligences.[172] All are vitally important. In the Basic School, every effort must be made to establish standards and benchmarks in the arts and, above all, to assess student progress in the essential languages of the various arts, discovering the full range of potential of each student.

Teachers in the Pittsburgh public schools participate in a project called Arts PROPEL. They have developed an arts curriculum that includes evaluation. Through so-called "domain projects," students are given exercises involving production, perception, and reflection, and they produce a piece of work. They must critique their own work, and critique each other's work, using agreed-upon standards. Final evaluation stresses the process, not just the finished product.

Thus, through a variety of written measures, students' language development is evaluated in an ongoing, systematic manner.

Second, teacher observation. Evidence gathered from written examinations surely can be helpful. But, in the Basic School, teachers remain the best source of evaluation. Here, too,

teachers are leaders. They are, after all, with students every day. They are constantly putting the bits of evidence together about a child's progress, and an experienced, insightful teacher can provide the most accurate, most revealing portrait of student growth over time. But skill in evaluating students doesn't just happen. It must be learned. And in the Basic School, staff development should include seminars on how to gather evidence and monitor, effectively, every student's progress.

As a first approach, we recommend that teachers write down *narrative notations*, recording, in an open-ended fashion, significant events that mark student progress and reveal growth or barriers to learning. Such information may be gathered during a reading session, or while a group is working together on a science project, or perhaps as the student works independently, with a computer. Standards and benchmarks must, however, always be kept in mind.

At the New Suncook School in Lovell, Maine, teachers work together, observing students as they learn individually or in groups. Teachers then write anecdotal records of each child's performance. The school even developed anecdotal reporting tools for parents. These include "Magic Moments Books," in which a teacher writes a "proud moment" the child has had in school that relates to learning. Parents respond by writing about a proud moment the child had at home—all of which becomes part of the evaluation record.

Teachers may also use an *observational checklist*, a more structured approach to assessment. In this case, benchmarks are listed and the teacher records student achievement based on actual performance. In mathematics, for example, such a checklist might record student competence in the fundamentals

of computation, as students work together. In the arts, teachers might record the students' ability to play an instrument. In verbal language, student participation in group discussion or more formal speech-making might be recorded. The checklist, too, becomes part of the student's portfolio.

Teachers also observe the performance of students. In a third-grade classroom at Gibson Elementary School in Clark County, Nevada, the teacher used concrete objects such as stones, not just written numbers, in a mathematics examination. The results revealed that only six of the forty-five students understood "place value," even though they had scored quite high on a conventional paper and pencil test. Having students doing math with "real objects," which the teacher observed and recorded, uncovered misunderstandings not identified when students worked only with abstract numbers. These "performance-based" approaches to evaluation are praised by teachers precisely because they link evaluation directly to student learning and add enriching information beyond what standardized tests reveal.

Samuel Meisels, a national leader in assessment and professor at the University of Michigan, reminds us that performance-based assessment "enables students to demonstrate their knowledge or skills through solving problems, doing mathematical computations, writing journal entries or essays, conducting experiments, presenting oral reports, or assembling a portfolio of representative work."[173] This approach to assessment—more direct and more open-ended—can give teachers, parents, and students a revealing picture of what students actually know and can do, one that goes beyond the number scores or letter grades. To be most useful, however, such information should also relate to standards and be presented in a clear and sharply focused manner.

Third, student products and performance. In the Basic School, assessment includes what students actually *do*, beginning with samples of what they write. Essays, book reports, journal entries, letters, all can reveal student proficiency in literacy. Samples of student writing are perhaps the single most important source of evidence in the measurement of the students' academic progress, measuring not just how they write, but, above all, how they think. Audiotapes of student reports, readings, and recitations are also useful in documenting growth over time.

The craftsmanship students demonstrate, the skill needed to construct objects, follow directions, or perform tasks, is also evaluated. During school visits, we were impressed by just how much time young children spend working with their hands—shaping clay objects, painting, drawing, building birdhouses, setting up a science experiment. This work is important, too. But, again, the samples selected need to be evaluated according to the well-defined standards and benchmarks. There is, in short, a clear connection between performance and school goals. In the case of bulky objects, photographs of the completed project may be placed in the portfolio.

Also, student participation in theater productions can touch another dimension of a student's intelligence that should be recorded. It's hard to put a recital or a theater performance in a pizza box. But such activities can be videotaped and become part of the student's record. Teachers at the Key School in Indianapolis pioneered the use of "video portfolios" eight years ago. Videos vividly reveal the child's strengths and weaknesses in oral language, for example. These too can be gathered as evidence of a student's progress.

Students themselves may step back and assess their own work, reflecting orally or in writing on the work they are doing. How do they feel about the progress they are making in mathematics, for example? What do they believe are their areas of greatest strength? Where are their problems? Such participation can remove the mystery from assessment and help students clarify their own goals and reach higher standards. Some schools in England now include students for part of the parent-teacher conference sessions. It is seen as a time to have a three-way talk about goals and progress, and to address small problems as they occur. The time, originally called "Parent Consultation Days," has been renamed "Student Review Days" to make the point that the student is the focus.

Fourth, parent information. Finally, parents should be full partners in student assessment and evaluation. They can, for example, discuss with teachers the child's study habits and contribute their own impressions at teachers' conferences. This means, of course, that parents must be fully informed about school goals. Research reveals that parents who do receive frequent and positive messages from teachers about assessment are more likely to talk to their child, monitor their child's schoolwork, and help their child learn.[174]

At Rolling Hill Elementary School in Fairfax County, Virginia, teachers, students, and the principal engage in "portfolio conferences." Children are consulted on a variety of questions such as, "What skills does the writing in your portfolio show?" "Do the mathematics papers show progress?" "Why?" Students have been prepared for such questions through classroom discussion and the continual practice of self-evaluation. Then, at the first reporting period in November, parents meet with the teacher and discuss the contents of their

child's portfolio. Afterward, the portfolio goes home so children and parents can look at it together in more depth, and children can explain what they've been doing. Evaluation at Rolling Hill is a tool to enrich learning.

The staff at the Verdes Vegas Elementary School in Las Vegas, Nevada, redesigned its own report card to better communicate to parents what their children were learning in reading and math so the parents could assist at home and provide feedback to the teacher. This new report also includes a progress update for parents on children's achievement in specific skills. This record goes home to parents every nine weeks; weekly notices are sent home noting general performance.

An ongoing dialogue with parents is essential. Last fall, we observed one kindergarten teacher getting ready for an early November parent conference. She reviewed her notes about each child and looked again at the written work, test results, and collection of drawings and paintings in the portfolio. She then wrote a list of questions to ask the parent. "I always know and understand more about the children after the conferences . . . and it's important to keep parents informed. And through it all, children should be growing, responsibly, and with enthusiasm, toward high standards. My goal is to assure that no child is allowed to fail."

Measuring the School

Finally, the Basic School evaluates itself. All members of the community pause occasionally to consider what the school is doing to implement, in its own distinctive way, the components of an effective school—from building community to building character. We suggest, specifically, that school board members, the principal, teachers, and parents meet, at least annually, to talk about how the school is doing overall. And

the Basic School community might prepare a report card organized around the key components of an effective school. Each component of the Basic School would be evaluated.

Important questions to be addressed might include: Is the Basic School a community with clear goals? Are teachers leaders? Are parents active partners in the school program? Is language broadly defined to include mathematics and the arts, and is language viewed as central to all learning? Is there an integrated curriculum? Are there various sources for measuring student success? Also, are there flexible grouping arrangements? Is there a rich array of learning resources? Are children's physical and emotional needs being met? Does the school emphasize character as well as competence? For each question, the schools' successes and shortfalls would be thoughtfully documented.

The Basic School would prepare then, each year, a profile of its strengths and weaknesses as a community for learning. It could choose to concentrate on one area—parent partnerships, for example—organizing workshops throughout the year to search for ways to strengthen the relationship between the home and school.

In the end, the goal of all Basic School evaluation is to strengthen community, to create a curriculum with coherence, and to build a place committed to the growth of every child. James Agee wrote: "With every child who is born, under no matter what circumstance, the potentiality of the human race is born again."[175] In the Basic School, "measuring results" means both promoting and affirming this potential.

A Climate for Learning

Patterns to Fit Purpose

In the Basic School, every student is encouraged to become a disciplined, creative, well-motivated learner. Class size is kept small, and the teaching schedule and student grouping arrangements are open, to empower teachers and promote learning. Connections are made across the generations, to enrich students' lives.

On a warm April afternoon, we walked into a fifth-grade classroom in New Haven, Connecticut. Thirty students were crowded around the teacher's desk, not sitting in orderly rows. Was this a friendly scene, or had something ominous occurred? Pausing, we discovered a magic moment. The children were discussing Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, debating, with great animation, whether little Oliver could make it in their home town and concluding that, while Oliver had survived in London, he'd never make it in New Haven, a much tougher city. Children were engaged in a community of learning, making connections from what they had learned in the classroom to life.

The Basic School is a community with shared goals. It has a curriculum with coherence. The third priority brings these

together in a climate that promotes learning. School climate is created by great teachers who perform heroic acts every day, often working under difficult conditions. In our school visits, we did observe, some unsuccessful teachers. Overwhelmingly the teachers we observed, however, were committed, creative, and almost universally well liked by students. Indeed, 96 percent of the students in our survey agreed that most of their teachers "are good." A similar percentage said teachers encourage them to do better. And almost all the students agreed that most of their teachers "care a lot about children." With all the talk about school problems, we should celebrate the fact that, overall, students think very well of their teachers.

Table 17

How Nine-, Ten-, and Eleven-Year-Olds Feel about Their Teachers

(Survey of Students)

	PERCENTAGE AGREEING
Most of the teachers I have had in this school are good.	96%
If I do poorly, my teachers encourage me to do better.	96
My teachers usually want to hear my ideas.	91
Almost all the teachers in my school care a lot about children.	96

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Excellence in education means excellence in teaching. But for teachers fully to succeed, the conditions that affect instruction

must improve, beginning with a reduction in class size, especially in the early grades. Further, the daily class schedule must be flexibly arranged so teachers are not preoccupied by the clock, and a variety of grouping arrangements should be used. Finally, classrooms in the Basic School should make connections across the generations. Simply stated, the *patterns for learning must fit purpose.*

Class Size to Fit Purpose

For about six hours every day, students and teachers live in classrooms, places not much larger than a spacious living room. Typically, primary school classes are assigned about twenty-five students, and each student occupies a few feet of space. This does not take into account desks and tables. Sometimes the physical crowding is worse.

We visited a Midwest school where thirty elementary students occupied one small homeroom. Students found it difficult to move comfortably from one work station to another. It was simply impossible for the teacher to give individual attention, and about twenty minutes of every hour ended up devoted to distractions, not learning. At the end of a hectic day the teacher said: "When someone says to me class size doesn't mattĕr, I know they've never spent a full day or even an hour with thirty six-year-olds."

Small classes enrich learning, especially in the primary grades. This is a time when children develop at very different rates, when they need more personal assistance—for lost gloves or spilt paint. The simple truth is that most adults would have their hands full taking four or five young children to McDonald's. If this nation is serious about high academic achievement for all students, perhaps the most important

investment we could make would be to reduce class size in the early grades.

A Tennessee study revealed that when class size was restricted to seventeen, students in the small classes outperformed, in all subjects, those in larger classes. A statewide program in Indiana called "Prime Time," has reduced class size to twenty or fewer students in the early grades, with positive results. And a recent Gallup poll revealed that 82 percent of parents surveyed agree that small classes make "a great deal of difference."[176] What's alarming, however, is that budget cuts, in some districts, are moving schools in precisely the opposite direction.

Table 18

Average Class Size

(Elementary School)

	MEAN NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Kindergarten	23
First Grade	24
Second Grade	24
Third Grade	25
Fourth Grade	26

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. National Survey of Elementary School Principals, 1990.

A reasonable class size is, without question, a key to excellence. For the Basic School, we recommend that the class size be limited, ideally, to no more than seventeen students each. For many schools this means more teachers and more money. But the real issue here is the ratio of adults to children. Some schools we visited, unable to hire more teachers, were

using university interns, or parents and grandparents, as teacher aides, to give all youngsters close and continuing attention.

Small classes, while important, are not sufficient. Mary Beth Morgan of Indiana's Prime Time reminds us: "Reduced class size is only the precursor for more effective teaching. When combined with other elements of an effective school, it can make a difference." For example, the way classrooms are organized also sends an important message to students about learning. One classroom we visited in North Carolina had small tables placed strategically around the room, with "work stations"—a science lab, a computer center, a garden space. In the corner there was a "Reading Nest," with a raised platform covered with pillows. An area carpet was in the center and splashes of artwork, maps, and large printed posters covered the walls. In this classroom, the focus clearly was on learning, not on the teacher's desk.

In the Basic School, there is no rigid formula about how desks and work stations should be arranged. We observed outstanding teachers functioning in a variety of settings. The goal should be to organize the room in ways that enhance learning, that encourage group interaction, and give to children a sense of beauty and order. In the end, the teacher must decide.

Resetting the Clock

Time is the student's treasure. And work that is truly valued takes time. To expect a child to complete artwork in twenty-minute intervals, twice a week, or to complete a science experiment, or write a poem or story in thirty minutes is, of course, foolish. More than 90 percent of the elementary school principals surveyed said that "teachers should have flexibility in adjusting time." We agree.

We found, however, that in too many schools the day is chopped up in ways that restrict learning. Units of study are forced into rigid time blocks, and in some schools, teachers compulsively watch the clock, devoting forty minutes to each subject, no more, no less. One teacher observed flatly: "The day is too fragmented for the kind of learning I want. Having rigid time blocks has nothing to do with how I want to teach, or how children learn." A third-grade teacher in Illinois told us: "We always are driven by a rigid schedule. We always laugh a little about it, but the truth is the clock is ticking off rigid periods. It is one of the most oppressive features of teaching at our school."

In the Basic School, time is in the service of learning. The school day must, of course, be planned. Teachers, as they think about the day, consider just how much time will be devoted to various lessons. The important point, however, is that such scheduling should serve only as a guide, not a mandate. Specifically, we recommend that teachers in each classroom be free to adjust the class schedule, being held accountable for results, not their conformity to the clock.

Grouping to Fit Purpose

One of the most controversial issues we encountered was how students should be "grouped." For years, educators have argued about whether classrooms should be "graded" or "nongraded," and parents often have strongly formed opinions on the subject. One teacher said: "Frankly, I'm convinced that the structured grade level approach should be abandoned to make way for a system that is more developmentally oriented." Other teachers worry about too much openness. A teacher in a "nongraded" school complained: "It doesn't make sense to put

five- and eight-year-olds together all day when their attention spans and levels of learning readiness are so different."

In earlier days, students went to one- or two-room schoolhouses. Everyone was grouped together, with older students often teaching younger ones. The "graded" school—grouping students by age—became popular in the late nineteenth century as enrollments grew and as schools needed to become more "efficient."[17] Rigid time blocks and grouping arrangements soon became standardized, creating what Albert Shanker frequently calls the "factory model." He asks: "How do we organize schools and classrooms, given the fact that kids learn differently and at different rates?" Perhaps students should be mastering material and moving ahead without grade-level restrictions. Otherwise, an enthusiasm for learning may be stifled at an early age."

In the Basic School, there is no single pattern. The time has come to move beyond the tired old "graded versus nongraded" debate—just one more false dichotomy in education. What is needed, we believe, is a more *flexible* approach to grouping, one with many patterns. In the Basic School, students are grouped in at least five different ways, each with a special purpose:

- homeroom grouping, *for placement and a sense of family*;
- mixed-grade grouping, *for cooperative projects*;
- focused grouping, *for intensive coaching*;
- individual grouping, *for independent work*;
- all-school grouping, *for community building*.

Homeroom Grouping. We begin, first, with the "homeroom." The term "homeroom" is often used in high schools. It's the place where students assemble at the beginning of the day before moving on to other classes. We believe the idea of a homeroom applies to the early grades as well. By homeroom, we mean grouping students initially by age, for a home base. Since birthdays determine when children enroll in school, putting students first in a class based on age makes sense administratively, and it's a procedure parents understand.

Even more important, homerooms can also provide for each child a sense of "family," a place where children begin and end each day, and in the early grades the homeroom is the place where students do a lot of learning.

Some Basic Schools may wish to break out of the "single-age" homeroom and have children of different ages, such as five- and six-year-olds, grouped together. Others may wish to keep a homeroom together with one teacher for more than a single year. Researchers Edward A. Wynne and Herbert J. Walberg, after studying student grouping both here and overseas, concluded: "Learning in American schools often suffers because children and teachers are together for only a year, as a rule. Schools should try to keep discrete groups of students and teachers together over long periods of time."[178]

At the Waldorf School, an international network of independent institutions, students stay with a "main teacher" for eight years. An intimate, supportive learning community is established. At Seminole Spring Elementary School in Eustis, Florida, students and teachers stay together for educational *and* social reasons for as long as three years. "In our country, the family is not as strong as it once was," said principal Jack Currie. "For those kids who don't have a strong mom-and-dad

model, the teacher becomes a significant other. Keeping the group together builds confidence and caring."

Regardless of the length of time together, Basic School students most frequently are placed, first, in a homeroom, based on age.

Mixed-grade Grouping. But in the Basic School, the homeroom is not an isolated island, it's a staging ground for action. Far from being cut off from other classes, teachers and students in each homeroom regularly work with those in other classrooms, at their own level as well as in other grade levels. Fourth-graders and kindergartners, for example, work together on a science project, while fifth-graders help first-graders with reading or mathematics lessons.

Mixed-grade grouping has powerful benefits, both socially and educationally. By mentoring younger students, older students build their own character and develop a sense of responsibility. Younger children, on the other hand, can feel more secure in the school community as they get to know "a bigger kid." Further, researcher Robert Slavin reports that "cooperative learning" across grade levels is a key component to successful education. In a program called "Success for All," which has spread nationwide from Baltimore, older students tutor younger ones. This program demonstrates clearly that such grouping develops social skills, as well as important language skills.

Mixing the grades works especially well in the Basic School, with its thematic curriculum that connects all grade levels—making it possible for first-graders and fifth-graders to work together on such themes as The Life Cycle and Connections to Nature. Older students can teach younger ones

about good health and safety habits, and in so doing, teach themselves. It also works the other way. In one school where the Core Commonalities curriculum is being used, we overheard a second-grader telling a fourth-grader what it means to "produce and consume."

At the May Street Elementary School in Hood River, Oregon, students are assigned to homerooms by age. However, the school also mixes the age groups. Students in kindergarten, first, and second grades get together during the day to study various subjects, depending on their performance level. At least half the students in second grade, for example, may travel each day to another classroom. This mixed group also includes children with learning disabilities, who are only part of the time grouped separately. The number of students moving back and forth may vary, of course, from two or three to a dozen or more, depending on the task.

Students at Ridgeway Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri, have "Learning Communities" that span two grade levels, with three or four teachers in each community. Teachers feel that these mixed-grade communities have contributed to achievements by their students who have moved on to higher grades. For example, they point out that 97 percent of Ridgeway's former students, including those diagnosed as "learning disabled," were later on the junior high honor roll. Two Ridgeway students were Presidential Scholars in high school and others had been nominated. "We've learned that chronological age doesn't mean everything in terms of learning," notes Susan Fales, the principal. "In our school, you may have seventy to eighty kids interacting with each other on many levels—academic, social, and physical, and they clearly spark each other. The focus is on individual success, *within community*."

Focused Grouping. As a third approach, Basic School students with similar aptitudes and interests occasionally are brought together for intensive coaching, an approach we've called "focused grouping," described by some as "homogeneous grouping."

Bringing students together to concentrate on a special task can occur within a class, and across grade levels, too. The value of such an approach seems apparent. We only have to think of sports: Typically, beginners in tennis are placed in one group, the more advanced in another. In music, beginning piano players do not routinely receive lessons with more proficient players.

Such focused grouping can be helpful in academic learning, too—reading and writing, mathematics and science, for example. Children who need intensive coaching in one area or another should get it. The Johns Hopkins University researchers report that such homogeneous grouping can be effective when integrated in the course of a day with other grouping arrangements.

At the Key School in Indianapolis, students are organized into special interest groups called "pods" that meet four times each week. Math, architecture, drama, choir, instrumental music, and the physical sciences are among the offerings. Specialists teach the violin or a foreign language. In the "math pod," students play board games that develop their logical, spatial, and mathematical skills. In the "architecture pod," students with special interests in this area adopt houses in the neighborhood, present reports on them, and go on architectural walking tours.

Focused grouping can be pedagogically effective. As students with similar interests and skills work together, they gain confidence and encourage one another. But we add a strong word of caution: Focused grouping is *always* a temporary arrangement. Under no circumstance is a Basic School student to be "tracked," locked into a class that separates students, based on an arbitrary judgment. As in all other arrangements, the pattern should fit a larger educational purpose.

Individual Grouping. There are many times, throughout the day and week, when students in the Basic School engage in independent study, gathering evidence, writing reports, working alone in their own classroom, or in the Learning Resource Center. Just as a musician practices alone, students, too, need time alone to concentrate on a single task, developing the skills of self-directed learning.

In one school in the Midwest, we walked into a classroom midday. All students were deeply engaged in independent study. They hardly noticed our arrival. The teacher met us at the door. We moved easily from one work area to another, observing one student at a computer writing a story, another checking an experiment, a third reading silently in a corner, all completing their own projects, without distractions.

In the Basic School, time is set aside regularly for such independent work—a block of time when everyone sits quietly with a book, or perhaps writing a story or engaged intently in a challenging math assignment. At one school we visited, the day begins with a fifteen-minute reading period. Everyone in the school—the principal, teachers, students, secretaries, and the custodian—sits quietly and reads when the bell rings at 8:15 A.M. The principal announces over the public address system: "DEAR Time—Drop Everything and Read."

Individual grouping is not a recess period. Rather, it is a time for individuals to pursue learning on their own, with clear goals and standards to be met.

All-School Grouping. Finally, there is all-school grouping, a time when the *whole school* becomes a classroom, when everyone has a shared experience. On such occasions, children may read their poetry to others, or perhaps a class may put on a play for the school, or student musicians, from across grade levels, may present a concert. In the Basic School, such gatherings are scheduled throughout the year. The point of these all-school groupings is, as educator Theodore Sizer elegantly put it, "the gathering of children"—a time to remind everyone that the entire school is a community for learning.

At the Cambridge Friends School in Massachusetts, everyone comes together every Thursday morning. On the day of our visit, students and teachers were joined by a few parents in the modest-sized gymnasium. Everyone sat on the floor. A performance by third-graders of African drum music and Japanese dances began the celebration, with the audience in rapt attention. Hearty applause followed each performance. Next, a kindergarten teacher led everyone singing, *"If you had potatoes and I had tomatoes, we could have dinner together,"* and *"You know I'd be glad to share what I had, cause that's what friends are for."* Kindergartners were thrilled, of course, but third- and fourth-graders participated wholeheartedly as well. Even the older boys seemed engaged, not disdainful. A room filled with over two hundred students swayed, the children supporting one another, meeting together as one class.[179]

CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

The Basic School builds bridges to connect the generations. Specifically, we propose intergenerational programs, with retirement villages becoming classrooms and with older people serving as mentors and tutors to young students through "Grandteacher" programs in the school.

In America today, older and younger people exist side by side, brushing elbows but hardly touching one another. Toddlers are in day care, and older children are in school, often organized rigidly by age. Young adults go off to college, parents are in the workplace, older people are in retirement villages, nursing homes, or apartments, living all alone. What we are left with is a "horizontal culture," one in which each age group is disconnected from the others, separated so completely that it is possible, quite literally, to go through life spending most waking hours only with one's peers.

"Children are growing up alone," one kindergarten teacher told us, "and I really think it's sad that they never seem to be with older people. They don't know how adults think or what they do. I'm convinced it affects their learning." Another said: "Children are coming to school with so much confusion about whom to trust."

Psychiatrist James Comer, in reflecting on his own childhood, concluded that much of the trouble we attribute to our young really stems from their sense of separation from the larger world. When he was growing up, Dr. Comer says, adults were locked into a "conspiracy" of protection for a child.[180] "And children knew what to expect," he said. "Everyone had a real sense of place and belonging. Even if you didn't have a high status, you really had a sense of community. . . . Everything a child knew about what was right and wrong, good and bad,

came to him or her through those adult authority figures. Now we may not think of that as so desirable; on the other hand, those young people felt supported by the adults who could sanction or not sanction behavior."[181]

"The continuity of all cultures depends on the living presence of at least three generations," wrote anthropologist Margaret Mead,[182] and quality education depends on such relationships as well. Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh found that performance improves in mathematics, reading, spelling, grammar, English language, and even handwriting when senior citizens help in classrooms. When teachers were asked to evaluate the impact the older people had in their classrooms, they overwhelmingly reported improvements in the psychological well-being of students, such as "motivation to learn" and "less aggressive behavior." At the same time, participation by an older person freed teachers to give individual students more attention (table 19).

Table 19

How Teachers View the Impact
of Older People in the Classroom

	More Common	No Change	Less Common
Impact on Students			
Students motivated to learn	82%	17%	0%
Cooperative student behavior	79	20	0
Positive student behavior	76	21	0
Students relaxed/contented	68	53	35
Aggressive student behavior	7	53	35
Impact on Teachers			
Teacher time to work with individuals or small groups	78	22	0
Teacher time to work with large student groups or whole class	55	39	4
Teacher insight into student behavior	54	44	1

Source: Sally Newman and Julie Riess, "Older Workers in Intergenerational Child Care," *Generations Together*, July 1990, 18.

Last fall, students at David Cox Road School in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, traveled by bus to the local nursing home. Seniors gathered to hear the children sing "The World Is a Rainbow," and, at the end, applauded, calling for encores. In the lounge, materials for pumpkin painting were set up and seniors in wheelchairs, joined by the children, sat around the tables. On the second floor were several seniors who, though ambulatory, rarely left their beds. A staff member took some children to each room to personally invite the seniors, who responded by leaving their beds for the first time in months. As the children left, some residents cried, and all wanted the youngsters to stay. The children gave out hugs and assurances that they'd be back. Joy Warner, a teacher at the

school, told us, "Children learn best when they interact with others, seeing beauty in all kinds of people, and learning how to give."[183]

In the Basic School, every learning pattern fits a strong educational purpose. Classes are small enough for teachers to give students one-on-one instruction. The class schedule and student grouping patterns are flexible enough to make the climate creative, and the classroom is open enough to encourage connections across the generations. Linda Darling-Hammond, professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, expressed it well: "The challenge is to focus on what students need and then work in an environment flexible enough to allow us to meet those needs."[184]

Resources to Enrich

The Basic School makes available to all students rich resources for learning, from building blocks to books. Libraries, zoos, museums, and parks in the surrounding community become resources, too. And on the threshold of a new century, the Basic School gives all students access to the new electronic tools that connect each classroom to vast networks of knowledge.

In the Basic School, resources enrich learning. All students have available to them books and garden space and art supplies and places to learn in the surrounding neighborhood. Students in the school also have access to the new "electronic teachers"—computers, videotapes, and CD-ROMs that can, quite literally, transform learning. Consider how a fourth-grader sitting in a classroom in New Jersey or in Oregon or in Ohio can take a "magic carpet" field trip to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Consider, too, how it's now possible for young students to be electronically "transported" to the moon or to the bottom of the sea, or to peer inside a human cell. These resources, taken together, create a climate for enriched learning.

Amy Natiello's fifth-grade classroom at Orchard School in Ridgewood, New Jersey—the kind of classroom we have in mind—has bookshelves filled with such classics as *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and more recent award-winning books such as *Shiloh*, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor and *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle. There are maps, a globe, and a "grow lab" for garden plants. But the classroom also has a *telephone*, a vital link to networks of knowledge in the world outside. There are computers, a CD-ROM, and a cable TV monitor. With these electronic tools, students master math concepts, write creatively, and along with students in New Zealand, study acid rain using the computerized National Geographic Network.

The new learning tools—from VCRs to computers to laser discs—can, without question, extend the classroom and bring the world into the classroom as well. Yet, in far too many schools, even the most basic resources are in short supply. More than half the elementary schools in the United States do *not* have adequate classroom reference books, or science materials, or sports equipment, according to the teachers we surveyed. More than one out of four do not even have adequate books and instructional materials. Fully a third of the teachers rated the school library as inadequate, and 20 percent said paper and pencils were in short supply. In an earlier survey, we learned that teachers in this country actually spend, on average, hundreds of dollars of their own money every year to buy basic school supplies. In such places, it is ironic to talk about CD-ROMs (table 20). Children need both the basic resources and the new electronic tools to learn.

Table 20

Are the Following Instructional Resources in Adequate Supply?

(Survey of Teachers)

	Percentage Indicating "Have Enough/Is Available"
Paper and pencils	77%
Books and instructional materials	73
Audio-visual equipment	67
School library	64
Maps	60
Art supplies	55
Science materials	49
Sports equipment	46
Classroom reference books	46

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

One teacher in a small school in Illinois noted: "Our school board keeps talking about computers. This is so ironic since almost every weekend I go out and get a new supply of crayons, paste, and construction paper simply because we have no supplies budgeted at the school." A first-grade teacher in suburban Arizona said: "I was given two boxes of paper last winter and told that's it for the year. It seems that most of my pay buys things for our room—paper, pencils, crayons, the basics. Heaven help us!"

We recommend that every elementary school take an inventory of their resources for learning, beginning first with the most essential, from building blocks to books. With such an assessment they can establish clear priorities. In the Basic School, resources begin with the basics—paper and pencils, building blocks, maps, globes, microscopes, and art supplies. And in a world where many children see more concrete than

grass, students should, at least occasionally, dig into soil, plant vegetables, and share the satisfaction of their own harvest. Basic School classrooms are also filled with rock collections, tape measures, even fish and a gerbil or two, all of which excite children and invite their discovery, and creativity. "A set of blocks," Joanne Oppenheim notes, "may become a skyscraper today, a zoo tomorrow, and a space station the next day."

The Craycroft Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, turned its barren school yard into a desert habitat, with a meandering trail one quarter of a mile long that passed by cactus and rocks and desert animals. A seemingly dead space became a living laboratory. Craycroft also created garden spaces—outdoor classrooms where students planted seedlings. Railroad ties, donated by the Southern Pacific Railroad, line the garden rows. There's also a fish pond, a waterfall, and a marsh area where students make soil comparisons and analyze the water's nutrients. In a striking lesson in Connections to Nature, a three-hundred-gallon collection tank takes the runoff from the school roof to irrigate the garden soil.

Basic resources enrich learning in the Basic School.

A Treasury of Books

The Basic School is a language school, and books are everywhere. Reading is celebrated in every classroom. Rather than rely solely on "basal readers," each school classroom is stocked with classics. Children learn to treasure E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *The Nightingale*, and Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, to name a few. "Books speak to children through

stories they can relate to," notes Barbara Barsto, director of the Cuyahoga County Library in Ohio.

The Basic School also has a warm and inviting Learning Resource Center—a classroom for all classes. A recent Colorado study found that there is a direct correlation between students' achievement and the size of the school library or media center.[185] Not only does the Basic School have lots of books available to the children, it has videotapes, recordings, and computer programs available to both teachers and students.

At a modest school in the Southeast, the old library has been turned into a bright and spacious room, carpeted throughout. The shelves contain eight thousand titles. Four computers are housed in carrels in the back. Regarding her mission, the coordinator said: "Mainly, I try to get the children to feel welcome in the resource center, to learn that it is a place they can use. I try to get across that reading is more than workbooks, that there is joy to be found in a good story."

The Learning Resource Center at an elementary school in Delaware, is, quite literally, in the very center of the school. When children step out of their classrooms they see shelves lined with books, and colorful banners reading "It's Fun to Read." Rocking chairs invite "grandteachers" to sit and read with students. There's a reading nook in one corner, an elevated platform with a ladder, where children curl up with a book. Students and teachers at the school say the Resource Center is "everybody's classroom." It is used for group projects, too, with fourth graders and second graders studying together, and with a "grandparent storytime" scheduled every afternoon.

At a Midwest school, the librarian encourages each student to choose a treasured book from the shelves on his or her birthday. The student's name is printed on a colorful bookplate inside and the book is then placed on a special display shelf. The day we were there the librarian came to a first-grade classroom and called the "birthday child" to her side. She held up the book, showed the class the dedicatory bookplate, and the child then told the class why she liked the book. The student then took the book home for the week, before bringing it back for the class to read.

The Basic School is filled with a treasury of books.

Electronic Classrooms

Beyond building blocks and books, students in the Basic School also have access to the new technology, described by one teacher as the new "electronic teachers." Ms. Natiello, at New Jersey's Orchard School, put the challenge this way: "If you're an educator, and a conscientious learner, how can you ignore technology? It's all around us. To me it's exciting to make these remarkable tools work for children and watch them enrich my class."

Research reveals that some students who use computers can become better readers. Others may grasp abstract math concepts more thoroughly than do nonusers. Further, students who have used word processing for writing have become more sophisticated writers, outscoring noncomputer students in verbal creativity.[186] In Santa Ana, California, students who studied science using English and bilingual videodiscs not only enjoyed the subject more, but scored higher on achievement tests than those who did not have such equipment.[187] In Indian River County, Florida, a new community-wide telecomputing network allows students to tap into educational software from

their home, which has reduced television viewing by 40 percent.[188]

Despite the great potential, access to technology in most classrooms is still wholly inadequate. Frankly, it's shocking that every other enterprise in this country—from banks to airlines to hotels to places of commerce—has, quite literally, been transformed by technology. They simply could not carry on their work, even for five minutes, without it. And yet it would be possible to remove all the technology from the nation's schools and most students and teachers would hardly know the difference.

Today, just 23 percent of the nation's elementary schools have CD-ROMs, only 20 percent have interactive videodiscs, and just 8 percent have a satellite dish for the retrieval of television signals (table 21). Especially troubling is the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged. We were in affluent districts where students had the latest state-of-the-art hardware, while schools in our poorest communities had few books and broken-down projectors. One really does wonder if we're serious about educating our children for the next century, when we're barely equipping them for this one.

Table 21

U.S. Elementary Schools Using New Technologies

Type of Technology	Number of Schools Using New Technology	Percentage of Total U.S. Elementary Schools
CD-ROM	11,794	23%
Interactive videodiscs	10,043	20
Satellite dish	4,269	8

SOURCE: Quality Education Data, *Technology in Schools 93-94*, 1994.

In the Basic School, the goal is to make rich resources for learning available to every student. The pattern may surely vary from one school to the next. However, we recommend, as a long-term goal—ideally by the year 2000—that every school be equipped with a television set, computer, and a telephone connection.

First, every classroom should have a television set and a videocassette player. In the 1950s, television was billed as an exciting teacher that would transform schools. The promise was to bring, electronically, great teachers to all students. Unfortunately, quality programming was in short supply and good programs, when they *were* aired, often were scheduled at times teachers could not use them. VCRs now make it possible for programs to be shown to students at convenient times, and it's estimated that over 75 percent of the nation's schools now have VCRs available. In addition, the number of U.S. schools with cable television has risen nearly ten-fold in just three years—from a little over six thousand to more than sixty thousand.[189] Roughly 12 percent of schools now regularly use videodiscs, which bridge television and computers. The first step, then, is to have a television that can bring live or recorded programs to children, as well as the rich supply of videocassettes that touch almost every part of the school curriculum.

Second, all Basic School classrooms should have at least one computer for every five students, with a capacity for CD-interactive discs.[190] The computer is, without question, the most popular and most versatile new resource, and yet, while computers are in almost every school, they are not conveniently available to all students. While 70 percent of the nation's elementary schools have a computer laboratory—with computers in separate rooms—less than 20 percent have several computers in each classroom, within easy reach of

students, according to our survey. Forty-two percent of the teachers said there is "one computer in every classroom" (table 22). In the Basic School, we recommend that, as a minimum, one computer be made available for every five students in the class. Further, each teacher should have a computer for record-keeping, to prepare lesson plans, and to communicate with colleagues, with students, and even with parents.

Table 22

Which of These Best Describes Access to School Computers for Your Students?

(Survey of Teachers)

	PERCENTAGE AGREEING
There is a computer lab in the school.	70%
There is one computer in your classroom.	42
There are several computers in your classroom.	19
There are a few computers which students can use.	15
Students do not have access to computers in the school.	5
There are no computers.	1

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Third and perhaps the most essential, a telephone in each classroom is required. Why telephones? Only 12 percent of the teachers nationwide have telephones in their classrooms.[191] Without a telephone line, there is simply no way for either the teacher or students to have access to the new electronic

highway—connecting into networks such as Internet, which have almost limitless sources of knowledge. Telephones also open up communications with parents. The Monforton School in Bozeman, Montana, has a telephone in every classroom, and teachers use it to reach out to parents. At a school in the Midwest, teachers regularly put special assignments on telephone recorders. At the Hefferan Elementary School in Chicago, the staff believes that placing a telephone in each classroom—which enabled teachers to call parents on the spot—changed the entire climate of the school.

Homes are often far ahead of schools in making computers, televisions, and VCRs available to children. *America Online*, a computer service, has what's called the "Academic Assistance Center," which helps students locate information on specific subjects and even includes a "teacher pager," which puts the student in direct contact with a teacher who comes "on the line." We also watched fifth-graders using computer encyclopedias at home to locate information for school reports. The home had, quite literally, become a classroom.

We recognize that most schools have a very long way to go. Still, planning can and should begin, and we urge, specifically, that every Basic School develop its own Technology Master Plan, recognizing that the timetable will surely vary from school to school. John See, an official with the Minnesota Department of Education, recommends that all technology plans have these common elements: Begin by asking *why* a particular technology is needed. Be open to *all kinds* of technology, not just computers. Always consider how technology can be *integrated* into the curriculum. Finally, include *staff development* in the plan.[192]

The last point is critically important. Technology, no matter how sophisticated, will not work well in schools if teachers feel intimidated by it or insecure. Yet a national survey revealed that nearly two-thirds of the nation's elementary teachers do not feel confident with computer technology. It's not that teachers are *against* technology. Rather, the real barriers are lack of money and inadequate teacher training. One teacher commented, "We have just spent thousands of dollars on new computers for each classroom and yet no one has taken five minutes to prepare us for what's been called the 'technology revolution.'" We recommend, therefore, that in the Basic School no equipment be purchased and installed without involving teachers actively in the plan and providing adequate time for inservice training.

At David Cox Road Elementary School in Charlotte, North Carolina, technology has become a rich resource for learning, with teachers and students actively involved. Every classroom has a television monitor, a VCR, and computers, all interconnected. And for special presentations—if there is insufficient room in the auditorium—some students watch from their classrooms, on closed-circuit TV. Within a David Cox classroom, a teacher can also engage eight or ten children with a computer-based lesson while working intensively with a group of students at another workstation. A video camera also is available. One student took the camera with her on a visit to her grandmother near Niagara Falls. With the help of an uncle, she selected special sights, wrote a script, and filmed and narrated a film for her classmates back home. They, too, took a trip to Niagara Falls.

Technology can, without question, transform classrooms. It cannot, however, replace teachers. Television can take students to the moon and to the bottom of the sea. Calculators can solve problems faster than the human brain. Computers

can instantly retrieve millions of information bits and connect teachers and students to classrooms all around the world. Word processors can help children write and edit. But technology *cannot* make value judgments. It cannot make students wise or able to distinguish the beautiful from the vulgar. There are times when the switches must be turned off, when students should put their own lives in perspective and sort out the trivial from that which is elegant and enduring. For this, we need teachers, not computers.

Neighborhoods for Learning

Finally, resources for learning in the Basic School extend beyond the school into the neighborhood. We visited one urban school where a first-grade teacher plotted a large map of the two-block-long commercial street next to the school. It was a place most of the children passed through each morning. The teacher walked along the streets with her students. They then constructed a map of the territory, locating places they had seen. Every child took one section of the district, working very hard to fill in accurately the details—putting everything to scale. Locations for learning were spotted, and then revisited. When completed, the map was mounted on the wall. The neighborhood became a classroom.

Museums are exciting classrooms, too.

San Francisco's Exploratorium is a wonderfully creative place for learning, as is the Children's Museum in Boston. And just a few miles east of downtown Cleveland, in the University Circle, is the Cleveland Children's Museum, which is a classroom for thousands of students every year. One exhibit is an elaborate construction of small-scale bridges that can be raised, lowered, turned, and driven on. A waterway, complete with water currents and curving land masses allows small-scale

boats to be launched. Educators in north central Ohio, who didn't have easy access to the Cleveland Museum, created one of their own. Today, twenty thousand school children from thirty school districts visit the McKinley Museum of Science and Industry in Canton. A natural history section features dinosaur bones, including a life-sized dinosaur skull which children can literally climb into. Students study the ecosystem of a pond. A "space station" is filled with magnetics for experiments, encouraging children to be creative learners.

Some schools, we discovered, create their own neighborhood classroom. At Jackson Elementary School in Everett, Washington, nearby Pigeon Creek is a classroom to five hundred students, from kindergarten to the fifth grade. After discovering that the creek was devoid of life and full of sludge, teachers and students designed a science curriculum to bring it back to life. In the first-grade wing of the school, a tank is stocked with baby salmon, then monitored and watched, with the students noting the changes that come with the life cycle of the fish. Second- and third-grade students learn more about the broader environmental issues in nature—how water becomes polluted, why the fish can't survive without clean water, and how that affects the larger community. Fourth-graders make regular trips to the creek to monitor water quality.

Each year, all students stock Pigeon Creek by releasing salmon fingerlings into the water. And Jackson Elementary School has, annually, a "Salmon Celebration." "It definitely builds a sense of community, and this project has a way of sticking with them," says project coordinator and teacher Brandon King. "It's *their* Pigeon Creek." Further, what started as a school science curriculum has grown into a community project. The city has installed a new storm drainage system. A project board of directors includes members from the PTA as well as city government. "This is one of those things that is good for

the student, good for the teacher, and good for the community," said Mr. King. "And it has definitely brought the school together."

The Basic School is a community, with resources that contribute to a climate of active, creative learning.

Services for Children

The Basic School is committed to serving the whole child, acknowledging that a student's physical, social, and emotional well-being also relates to learning. Beyond a solid academic program, the school provides basic health and counseling services for students, referrals for families, and a new calendar and clock, with after-school and summer enrichment programs for learning and creative play.

It was Friday afternoon, the end of a busy week. A group of tired teachers in a Midwest school gathered in the crowded lounge. The conversation soon turned to troubled children. One veteran teacher said, "Frankly, I've noticed in the last few years that children's lives are not running smoothly. More and more children are upset when they come to school in the morning. They are often hungry or distressed because of what's going on at home. Some are abused. I know I'm supposed to teach math and get ready for the next state reading exam. But how can I neglect these children who are hurting?"

The focus of the Basic School always is on learning. The goal is to assure that every student will *educationally* succeed. But

a child who is sick, tired, hungry, or abused will find it difficult, if not impossible, to be a confident, creative learner. A third-grade teacher made the point precisely: "I just don't see how children can concentrate on reading if they're hungry or have a stomach ache."

Since the beginning of this century, when school nurses in Boston, New York, and other cities valiantly led the battle against infectious diseases and poor sanitation, and when young girls, trained in school, became "health teachers" in their homes, it has been widely accepted that good health relates to learning.[193]

By the 1920s, health services were well established in many schools. And most older Americans can recall the full-time school nurse who routinely scheduled health checkups, with vision, hearing, and dental screenings, who soothed headaches and upset stomachs and patched up cuts and scrapes in her office just down the hall. In some districts, even physicians came right to the school.

In recent years, health services have become casualties of budget cuts[194]—at the very time vast numbers of children are growing up less healthy and secure. In a Carnegie Foundation survey of teachers, more than half of the respondents said that "undernourishment" is a problem at their school. More than 60 percent cited "poor health" as a problem.[195] One teacher in a mid-sized city observed, "Every year there seem to be more physical problems at our school that interfere with learning. I know that children who don't eat well or don't get rest can't do well in school. Yet that's exactly what I'm seeing more and more."

Children are not just physically at risk, they are emotionally vulnerable as well.[196] There is an increase in clinical depression among elementary school children, according to the National Association of School Nurses.[197] One teacher in Maryland told us: "Sometimes I wish I were trained as a counselor as much as a teacher. I have so many students who aren't doing well in class because they are preoccupied with the problems in their lives."

Today's parents are no less committed, or less caring. What *has* changed is the loss of community, the fragmentation of family life. Time seems so limited, schedules so hectic, and parents often face conflicts between the demands of work and family. In such a climate, children suffer most. Schools, trying to pick up the slack, often become overburdened. Ninety-eight percent of the teachers we surveyed said that "people are expecting schools to do too much." Nearly 90 percent of the parents we surveyed said that "families are not taking enough responsibility for the welfare of their children."[198] Only about a third of the parents feel that "schools should take on more responsibility for the needs of children." One veteran teacher said: "I remember when we were expected just to educate the students. But now we're being asked to do everything for children. The schools are hopelessly overloaded."

Table 23

Attitudes Regarding the Expanding Role of Schools

(Survey of Parents and Survey of Teachers)

	Percentage Agreeing	
	Teachers	Parents
People these days are expecting schools to do too much.	98%	75%
Over the past ten years, schools have taken more responsibility for children's needs.	98	62
Families are not taking enough responsibility for the welfare of their children.	96	89
In the future, schools should take more responsibility for the needs of children.	10	32

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute. The International Schooling Project, 1994 (United States).

Most elementary schools are caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, schools cannot become "social service centers," solving every family problem. On the other hand, young children spend lots of time in school, which is, for some, the safest place they know. A child who is hurting cannot be ignored. One teacher said, "How can I neglect children who are hungry or abused?"

We propose a middle ground. What's needed, almost everyone agrees, including parents, is for the role of families to be strengthened. The Basic School as an educational institution focuses first on literacy, on general knowledge, and on helping all students becoming responsible, well-directed learners.

These educational objectives are at the heart of the Basic School. However, the focus is always on the whole child, and when it comes to learning, mind and body cannot be divided. Therefore, basic support services for children are also provided in the Basic School, with the recognition that such support will vary from one school to the next.

Basic Health Service

The Basic School is attentive, first, to the physical needs of children. Specifically, we recommend that every school have a basic health service, with at least a part-time registered nurse or nurse practitioner for routine services such as health screening, with emergency first aid, as well as teaching health education and disease prevention. After all, even healthy children, during the school day, have minor illnesses, and cuts and bruises which need attention. If left unattended, these may lead to complications, and diminished learning.

Most schools, even those with restricted budgets, evaluate the sight, hearing, and general health of students when they enroll. Almost 80 percent of the American public support some health services in the school, according to a Louis Harris poll.[199] However, according to our survey, only about one-third of the nation's elementary schools have daily nursing service. Forty-three percent have such services at least once a week. Twelve percent have no nursing service (table 24).

159

Table 24

How Often Are the Services of
a Nurse Available for Your Students?

	Percentage Agreeing
Daily	34%
At least once a week	43
At least once a month	4
Several times a year	6
Not available	12

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Elementary School Principals, 1990.

We visited several schools that had only the routine checks at the beginning of the year. At others, a nurse came once a week. We were especially impressed by those schools with restricted budgets that were using volunteers in creative ways. One school in the Southwest, for example, had a part-time school nurse paid by the county health department. Two parent volunteers, who had received health instruction, helped staffed the clinic. The day we were there, the nurse was giving several children their daily allergy shots. The parent aides helped four other children, one who had a stomach ache, another who had a fever, and two little girls on cots who said they "weren't feeling good."

At some schools the health service is comprehensive. In New Haven, Connecticut, for example, 90 percent of the 469 students at the Katherine Brennan Elementary School participate in the school-based health program. The school clinic includes a nurse, a nurse practitioner, and a social worker. A pediatrician visits the school once a week, and four students from a nearby school of nursing help throughout the year.

At Porter Elementary School in Johnson County, Kentucky, a Family Resource Center features a full-time nurse practitioner who performs first aid, treats minor complaints, and completes physical examinations and TB screenings for all children. The center has achieved 100 percent immunizations for the school's 564 students. Before the center opened, children with minor complaints were often sent home. Now, with parental consent, the clinic can treat a child, administer prescribed medication, and send the child back to class. At Porter, the motto is: "Children learn better when children are in better shape to learn."

The Hamilton Elementary School in San Diego opened its family health center in 1991. Today it serves twelve hundred students. Located in an adjacent building on the school grounds, the Hamilton Center is staffed by a service coordinator, a nurse, and four employees of various city or county health and social service agencies.[200] Doors are open from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M., to treat minor illnesses and complaints. Nurses also go to the homes of children to teach parents health and nutrition skills. Connie Busse, program director, says: "We're not a full health clinic. We don't want to be. We're trying to focus on prevention and find families an appropriate medical home."

Prevention is, in fact, the major emphasis of the Basic School. This nation simply must interrupt the cycle of ignorance about health that diminishes, for so many children, the quality of life today and will have such tragic consequences for the coming generation. Specifically, we recommend that the health professionals in the Basic School be considered teachers. School nurses should meet regularly with classes to talk about

wellness and good food, the value of exercise, and the damage that drugs, alcohol, and tobacco can do.

Helen Dugan, the school nurse at Center Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, is a gifted teacher who meets with all the students. She is enthusiastically welcomed into classrooms by colleagues. Offering a creative health curriculum on prevention, she teaches about dental health, drugs, and personal hygiene. She invigorates the classrooms she visits, often using a puppet stage in the doorway, while the children inside call out questions and the puppets respond. Ms. Dugan says, "Teaching children about their own bodies and giving them skills to help their families is a big step toward prevention."

Basic Counseling Service

Success in learning is also linked to emotional well being. Mary Futrell, of George Washington University, observes that the relationship between a child's emotions and learning is "a phenomenon every classroom teacher understands. Just as a child who is hungry cannot learn, so too a child who is wracked with anxiety or mired in depression or burdened with self-hatred cannot learn."[201]

The Basic School offers a basic counseling service that is both clinical *and* educational. Teachers in the school are, in the broadest sense, counselors, and counselors are teachers. And every elementary school should have a counseling support plan to help children who are hurting.

In his powerfully moving book, *Not All of Us Are Saints*, David Hilfiker, M.D., tells about a social worker who watched the play of young children in the city. "When still very young, they play at being police officers, firefighters, doctors, and teachers. . . . But at about six years of age, things begin to

change. In their games the children now begin to play addict, pusher, and narcotics agent. They play drunk; they play out fights between men and women, between parent and child. . . . Hope has already been crushed."[202]

The need for good counseling is urgently increasing, yet service available in most elementary schools is insufficient, or even nonexistent. Today, only 31 percent of the nation's elementary schools have daily counseling service; 36 percent have such service at least once a week, according to the principals (table 26). And in elementary schools where counseling services do exist, the ratio averages one counselor for four hundred and fifty to five hundred students.[203] In some large urban schools, one counselor serves up to eight hundred pupils.[204] A third-grade teacher in Illinois talked poignantly about the pain she felt at seeing children's emotional turmoil. "Tight funding," she said, "has left my school without a counselor, and teachers have to decide each day whether they are teachers or counselors." A second-grade teacher made the following observation: "Some days it's hard for me to know if I'm a counselor or teacher."

Many children have fears older people hardly understand. About 30 percent of elementary school students say they "worry a lot," according to our survey.[205] And children responding to an Iowa survey said they worry most about "a family member getting sick," and, sadly, the next highest worry was "doing well on tests." Nearly 70 percent said they also worry about "what parents think of their work" (table 25). Adults often forget what it's like to be little.

Table 25

What Third-Grade Children Worry About

Percentage of children who worry about:

a family member getting sick or hurt	77%
doing well on tests	71
what parents think of their work	68
drugs and alcohol	60
safety in the neighborhood	55
family problems	54
children tattling on them	52
being teased	47
making good decisions	38
people getting too angry	34
knowing what to do when they get angry	33

SOURCE: Jan Kuhl, "Report on Children's Needs Survey," Des Moines, Iowa; items selected from total survey of third-graders. Fifth-graders were also surveyed.

We recommend, specifically, that each Basic School have at least a part-time counselor. Some schools will require more, depending on school size and children's needs which, in some communities, are shockingly acute. In the Basic School, counseling is so intimately woven into the daily routine of school life that it is impossible to separate it from teaching. And in the Basic School, every elementary school teacher is continuously engaged in dealing with the social and emotional needs of children with a reassuring smile, a gentle pat, or a pause while a child talks about a problem.

A good counseling program deepens community and enhances learning. The full-time counselor at one successful school we visited meets regularly with teachers to talk about children with special needs. She visits classrooms as a guest teacher. There is a big colorful mailbox in the corridor just outside her office, and children are encouraged to leave confidential notes

or ask for an appointment. Teachers make referrals anytime. The counselor at this school also hosts lunches each day in her office for four or five children referred by teachers. Students view these lunches as something "very special." Teachers told us that the counseling program improves the academic performance of students, as they become emotionally more secure.

Table 26

To What Extent Are Counseling Services Available for Your Students?

	Counselor	Psychologist	Social Worker
Daily	31%	8%	7%
At least once a week	36	47	31
At least once a month	3	13	6
Several times a year	3	17	17
Not available	28	16	40

Source: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Elementary School Principals, 1990.

The Coventry Elementary School in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, has a full-time counselor. In addition to meeting the needs of individual students, Bruce Fink, the counselor, focuses on prevention. Working with one or two classes each day, he helps students make decisions or solve problems, and works with upper-grade students on "healthy chemicals" and "unhealthy chemicals," integrating his instruction with the health unit. The counselor introduces fifth-graders to the world of work, discussing such questions as, "How do you relate personal interests to vocational ones?" In commenting on his experience, Mr. Fink said: "Guidance is usually seen as necessary in junior high and high school. But at the elementary level, we can help before problems become deeply

entrenched. I was a counselor in the high school for nine years, the middle school for three. I have been here at Coventry Elementary for seven years, and this is the only place where I see real results."

In Des Moines, Iowa, a district-wide counseling program called "Smoother Sailing" has been introduced. With support from area businesses, school counselors from across the city were able to design their own curriculum handbook. Counselors were then assigned to schools, with a 250-to-1 student-counselor ratio. Teachers see a difference. The program has paid off. Des Moines schools report a decline in discipline and attendance problems, as well as an improvement of academic test scores. "The turmoil in children's lives is smoothed out by Smoother Sailing," said Barbara Sloan, a Des Moines principal. "It's a fantastic addition to our schools."

Afternoon and Summer Services

In yesterday's agrarian society, when most families lived on farms, children hurried home each day to help with chores and stayed home in the summer to cultivate and harvest crops. This outdated calendar and clock, which still regulates some schools, is vastly out of step with the realities of modern family life.[206] Today most parents work. The result is that every afternoon "latchkey kids" go home to an empty house,[207] and children everywhere are disengaged during the summer months.

"Children have become increasingly isolated from the adult world, and plain loneliness leaves them with very little curiosity, very little interest in learning," one Missouri teacher said. Another teacher in Massachusetts commented: "Many of my students just hang around at the end of every day. They

ask what they can do to help me. Often there's no one at home, and they're afraid to go home or spend time on the streets."

The Basic School, in recognizing the changing family schedule, offers a voluntary before- and after-school enrichment program, as well as "extended" year programs in the summer. For families that can afford to pay, a fee is charged to assure that these "enrichment" programs do not drain the regular school budget. For parents classified as poor, services should be subsidized. Also, afternoon programs might be staffed with a second team of teachers and counselors, city recreation leaders, or other volunteers, including retirees as well as college students.

Regardless of the arrangement, an effective school does care about the changing lives of children, and offers services to meet their needs. "It is unacceptable," as one teacher told us, "to send children off in the afternoon and know that they are unattended, drifting in the street."

Since 1990, the After-School Plus (A+) Program in Hawaii, has introduced an afternoon enrichment program in every school in the state. The purpose: to create a sense of *ohana*, the Hawaiian word for a "feeling of belonging." Participating children choose such activities as art, drama, and sports, or they can do homework. The program, which operates from 2 P.M. to 5 P.M., is for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. In Murfreesboro, Tennessee, eight elementary schools remain open twelve hours a day, some beginning at 6 A.M. The extended day gives children more time to pursue music, art, drama, computers, and foreign language. Participating families pay a small fee for each child. Students from nearby Middle Tennessee State University work alongside volunteers to staff the program.[208]

Saturday programs also can enrich learning. For example, the Saturday Science Academy in Atlanta, sponsored by Clark Atlanta University, is one of the oldest programs in this country. It offers 150 students in third through eighth grades enrichment programs in math, science, writing, and public speaking. Dade County in Florida uses Saturday Academies to concentrate on reading and math, which are incorporated in programs with such titles as "Architectural Math," "Earth Science Investigations for Young Scientists," and "Motion Unlimited: An Experience with Dance." And at Jackson-Keller in San Antonio, Texas, with its high rate of student turnover, Saturday is actually a time for students and parents to attend school.

Enrichment programs pay off. Researchers at The Johns Hopkins University report that giving students extra time before and after the normal school day to focus on reading and math improves achievement levels. Research also reveals that children who consistently attend summer school do more reading than those of similar income levels who do not attend. Yale University professor Edward Zigler observes that extending school services to provide children quality care increases a child's ability to succeed academically and also puts school buildings to fuller use. "We've got well over a trillion dollars invested in these schools," notes Zigler. "Why don't we use them more fully?"

Networks for Children

Elementary schools do, unfortunately, encounter a range of problems that are anything but routine and that require more comprehensive services. During one school visit, a mother showed up in a third-grade classroom at 8:00 o'clock Monday morning. She told the teacher that the father had been violent

over the weekend and "I have no place else to go." Many schools, we discovered, encounter acute problems that they are simply not equipped to handle—home violence, child abuse, or even homelessness. "All of our children are growing up in a world at risk, and we as adults have a collective obligation to do something about it," notes Allan Shedlin, Jr., executive director of the Elementary School Center.[209]

We suggest that every Basic School organize a *referral service*, a safety net that links students and their families to other support agencies in the region—religious institutions, hospitals, clinics, or counseling centers. James Comer, the Yale University child psychiatrist, has pioneered collaboration among professionals. There are now some two hundred "Comer Schools" in nineteen states and the District of Columbia. With the Comer Model, a professional team provides social and emotional intervention for young children, combining classroom teachers and professionals outside—mental health workers and social workers—and actively involves parents.

The Beverly School District in Massachusetts has a board of counselors, school nurses, and community medical care providers to assist teachers with health education in the classroom. In New Haven, Connecticut, a Health Board composed of teachers, students, and parents meets monthly to make suggestions about how to improve its school clinic. In some communities, the school building itself may be used by several different agencies to bring services to children and families.

Several years ago, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education in North Carolina decided to focus not just on schools but on *children*. A coordination of services was

required. Mayor Richard Vinroot set the tone when he said: "Education involves more than what happens between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. five days a week." In response, the school board organized a Children's Services Network. The Network, which brings together all of the community agencies concerned with children, will coordinate services, increase support, and prepare a report card on progress. This could be a model for other communities."[210]

In Palm Beach County, Florida, local officials created a special taxing district to support children's programs, administered by an independent government agency called Children's Services Council. After a county-wide survey, the ten-member council identified sixteen priorities—from reducing school dropouts to improving child care. Thus far, nearly sixty children's projects have been launched, including infant nurseries, intervention programs for kids with special needs, and parent support groups. On the West Coast, a recent referendum in Seattle requires that a portion of tax money be used to increase services in the elementary school. Children are a priority.

In our hard-edged, competitive world, such a commitment to children may seem quixotic. Not only have cultural connections faded, but the very notion of community seems strikingly inapplicable to contemporary life. Absent larger loyalties in this country, we are settling for little loyalties that diminish our national unity, and widen the social separations. There's a growing feeling that the social pathologies we now confront are just too deep to be remedied and that when it comes to our most glaring problems, especially those affecting children, little, if anything, can be done.

But good will runs deep in America. Throughout our history, the citizens of this country have shown their capacity to come

together and organize energetically and to great effect when inspired. We have dedicated ourselves to great causes, responding in times of crisis with vigor and an outpouring of concern. We are confident that with the right blend of commitment and imagination, America can come together once again.[211] But for this to be accomplished, we must move beyond ourselves, recognizing that, as Walter Lippmann said, "we are in truth members of one another."[212] Every community can, we believe, find creative ways to develop services that will make a difference for children and, ultimately, for the nation.

171

A COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER

The Core Virtues

The Basic School is concerned with the ethical dimensions of a child's life. The goal is to assure that all students, on leaving school, will have developed a keen sense of personal and civic responsibility. Seven core virtues, such as respect, compassion, and perseverance, are emphasized to guide the Basic School as it promotes excellence in learning, as well as living.

Thus far, we have considered three priorities for the Basic School: bringing people together, to build *community*; bringing the curriculum together, to achieve *coherence*; bringing resources together, to enrich *climate*. The fourth priority, *a Commitment to Character*, leads us, finally, to the issue of what impact the Basic School will have on students. Will everything we have talked about really make a difference in the lives of children? Will what students learn touch their deeper selves, helping them become not only more knowledgeable, but more responsible as well?"

Once, the focus of education was on body, mind, *and* spirit. Values, taught at home, and during worship, were reinforced at school. In 1837, Horace Mann, the father of the common

school, insisted that public schools should help students develop what he called "reason and conscience."[213] "The highest and noblest office of education," Mann said, ". . . pertains to our moral nature. The common school should teach virtue before knowledge, for although the latter should not be ignored, knowledge without virtue poses its own dangers...."[214]

Today, not only has this commitment to teach "virtue before knowledge" dramatically declined, but educators often feel uncomfortable even talking about such matters. It's all right these days to talk about *academic* standards, but we're far less willing to discuss *ethical* standards. An awkward silence seems to settle in when the subject turns to values. And what's especially disturbing is the way this void is being filled for children by media messages that glorify evil actions, creating what columnist William Raspberry chillingly describes as a "consciencelessness" among children.

Most elementary school students are living well-adjusted lives, and during school visits we were reassured, often inspired, by the sight of young children showing kindness to others, acting responsibly, living by the rules, trying to make sense of the moral ambiguities that surround them.[215] But, we also heard teachers express deep concern about the decline in ethical standards among children that's reflected even in the classroom. In one fourth-grade class, a student couldn't find his scarf and suspected it had been stolen. After searching for the object, the teacher discussed the problem with the class. Getting only a grudging response, she asked how many thought it was all right to steal. Nearly 80 percent said "yes," provided, they all agreed, "you don't get caught."

During our study, we asked nine- to eleven-year-olds in twelve countries about how they viewed student conduct at their

school. The response: 45 percent of U.S. students said cheating is a problem. Thirty-eight percent identified stealing as a problem. Sixty-seven percent said "students making noise and disrupting class" is a serious problem at their school. These responses placed United States children somewhere in the middle when compared to other countries (table 27).[216] One teacher summarized the situation this way: "I feel what I see these days is the 'Okay Generation.' No matter what the circumstances, everything will be 'okay.' Consequences seem to have no meaning for so many children."

Table 27

Which of These Are Serious Problems in Your School?

(Survey of Students)

	CHEATING	STEALING	STUDENTS MAKING NOISE AND DISRUPTING CLASS
Chile	66%	51%	88%
Mexico	53	52	75
Israel	49	45	72
Zimbabwe	48	61	49
Russia	47	59	55
Turkey	47	48	73
UNITED STATES	45	38	67
Germany	42	34	59
Great Britain	36	39	59
China	22	24	21
Italy	16	22	71
Japan	12	11	15

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

The harsh truth is that knowledge unguided by an ethical compass is, potentially, more dangerous than ignorance itself. George Steiner, in reflecting on the Holocaust, defined the

challenge this way: "We know now that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning."[217] What grows up inside literate civilization, Steiner asks, that prepares it for barbarism? What grows up is information without knowledge, knowledge without wisdom, competence without conscience.

Places to Build Character

Given these realities, the conclusion is clear: The Basic School must not only help students become literate and well informed, it must also help them develop the capacity to live responsibly and to be able to judge wisely in matters of life and conduct. But where do we begin? Is it possible to help students develop what Horace Mann called "reason *and* conscience"? If so, whose responsibility is it any way?

First, the family. Parents are, without question, most responsible for a child's ethical instruction. There can be no substitute for a mother and father who, from the very first, provide loving guidance and define for the child, both by what they say and how they live, standards of good conduct. And this obligation is something most parents understand. We discovered in our international survey, that 70 percent of parents in this country believe the family has the *primary* responsibility "for developing values in children" (table 28).[218] Other countries vary greatly in their views regarding the role of parents, a fact which reflects deep differences among the cultures. In China, for example, only 9 percent of the parents are assigned the responsibility for developing children's values to the family. No country, however, considered it to be the responsibility of the school alone.[219]

Table 28

Which of These Do You Think Has Primary Responsibility for Developing Values in Children?

(Survey of Parents)

	MOSTLY THE FAMILY	MOSTLY THE SCHOOL	SHARED BY FAMILY AND SCHOOL
UNITED STATES	70%	1%	29%
Germany	58	2	40
Mexico	50	0	50
Russia	46	2	52
Italy	47	0	53
Chile	44	1	55
Great Britain	44	1	56
Japan	44	1	56
Zimbabwe	25	3	72
Turkey	23	5	72
Israel	22	1	76
China	7	9	84

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

Clearly, when it comes to character building, the family is the key. There is simply no substitute for a mother and father who form a loving and supportive circle around the child, presenting, by word and deed, the precepts of good living, the virtues of a well-directed life. Author and commentator Cheri Fuller reminds us that the child may have many teachers along the way, but parents are the primary instructors and guides. Surely one of our most urgent obligations, as a society, is to support parents, who must assume the major responsibility for teaching values to the coming generation.

Second, places of worship. Traditionally, religious institutions have played a consequential role in the spiritual guidance of children, setting a high moral standard. William Raspberry, in writing about the demoralization of American society, argues forcefully that today our religious institutions have not only a spiritual but a social mission to fulfill. He quotes Robert L. Woodson, Sr., head of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, who says, "We have been looking for cures in all the wrong places. We don't have a crisis in recreation, or social services or consumer capacity. Certainly our children need these things, and need jobs too. But these things have no *redemptive* quality, and what our young people need above all is to be redeemed."[220]

Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles writes that all children have an innate "interest in God, in the supernatural, in the ultimate meaning of life, in the sacred side of things." They ask essential questions such as these: "Where do people go when they die?" "How do you know if God is happy?" "What does Allah do?" "Why do people go to church?" "What does it mean to be Jewish?" or "When I look up at the sky, I wonder if there are people up there, looking down at us. My daddy says no. But how can you know?"[221]

Private schools can respond to these concerns. Public schools are restricted by the Constitution from religious practice and instruction. They can, however, educate students *about* the powerfully influential role religion has played in human history. Students cannot know the history of art, for example, without discovering religious inspiration—from the Hindu cave paintings and the Buddhist art of Asia, to the Western art tradition. Students cannot know literature without understanding how religion has shaped the world's great writers, from the historians and playwrights of ancient Greece—Homer, Euripides—to writers of our own day such as

T.S. Eliot. Students cannot know music without grasping the power religion has for performers and composers, ranging from the amazingly gifted Hildegarde von Bingen, the German Benedictine nun of the 12th century, to Leonard Bernstein.

The quest for common learning is, quite simply, unimaginable, without knowing that the sense of the sacred and the search for enduring virtues have been central threads in the very fabric of human experience.

While direct religious instruction is not allowed in public education, some schools may wish to adopt a "released-time arrangement," one in which students leave school, with parent consent, for religious training. Released time has, in fact, been part of the public school system since 1914, and, today, roughly four hundred thousand students participate nationwide.[222] School policies in Fort Wayne, Salt Lake City, and Minneapolis, for example, grant public school students up to two or three hours every week to attend instructional programs sponsored by religious institutions.

In 1952, when the Supreme Court ruled released-time constitutional—*provided the school is in no way involved*—Justice William O. Douglas wrote: "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. We guarantee the freedom to worship as one chooses. . . . When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our traditions. For it respects the nature of our people and accommodates the public services to their spiritual needs."[223] Each Basic School must, of course, decide whether a released-time program is consistent with community expectations and family values.

Finally, the schools. The teaching of virtues cannot be divided. Schools, too, have a supportive role to play in character building, to enrich learning. According to a national poll, nearly 90 percent of the American people believe that emphasizing "habits of discipline" in the school would make "a great deal of difference" in student achievement. Several years ago, the United States Department of Education wanted to find out why a group of award-winning schools was so successful. The study concluded that while "academics" remained the central mission, these effective schools were equally concerned about "good character."[224]

It's true, of course, that schools are always teaching values. A commitment to education rather than ignorance is a value. Setting goals, getting to school on time, completing assignments are all values that go to the very heart of education. But virtues in the schools must be consciously affirmed, an intentional part of the school program.

Author William Kilpatrick makes this very point powerfully: "If students don't learn habits of courage and justice, curriculums designed to improve their self-esteem won't stop the epidemic of extortion, bullying, and violence. . . . Even academic *reform* depends on putting character first. Children need courage to tackle difficult assignments. They need self-discipline if they are going to devote their time to homework rather than television. . . . If they don't acquire virtues such as commitment to learning, objectivity, respect for the truth, and humility in the face of facts, then critical thinking strategies will only amount to one more gimmick in the curriculum."[225]

Reaching Consensus

The most frequently asked question is, "Whose values?" At any level, almost everyone seems to acknowledge the importance of character building. The real problem we face is deciding which virtues should be taught. There is a widespread feeling that with all of the diversity in America today, no consensus can be reached. Yet, after visiting schools, talking with teachers, principals, and parents, and reviewing the literature, we conclude that there is, in fact, a core of virtues on which practically everyone might agree.

E. D. Hirsch, author of *Cultural Literacy*, writes about what he calls "consensus values."[226] Thomas Shannon, executive director of the National School Boards Association, said recently there are "a vast number of [values] on which we can agree." Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, suggests: "There's a lot of consensus on which values are going to be taught."[227] Recently a national coalition of more than twenty organizations, ranging from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development to McDonnell Douglas Corp., formed a Character Education Partnership dedicated to "developing civic virtue and moral character in our youth for a more compassionate and responsible society," according to its mission statement.[228]

James Q. Wilson, in his insightful book *The Moral Sense*, says that universally held values and beliefs would include sympathy, fairness, self-control, and duty. William J. Bennett, in his best-selling anthology, *The Book of Virtues*, presents ten "time-honored understandings," which include self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, and faith.[229] There is, in short, a growing sense of urgency in this country that all of us should

affirm for our children a core of virtues to enrich their learning and guide their lives.

Five years ago, The Allen Traditional Academy Elementary School, in Dayton, Ohio, began emphasizing such values as "responsibility" and "respect for others." At that time, it placed twenty-eighth among the city's thirty-three elementary schools in test scores.[230] Since building core virtues into daily life, the school has climbed to fifth place among the city's schools. This fall, all forty-seven public schools in Dayton acknowledged the importance of building character, based on the success of The Allen School. Parents are kept informed through flyers sent home that suggest family learning activities that might illustrate a certain trait. Businesses, the religious community, the public library, and community organizations help reinforce the virtues.[231]

Schools in St. Louis, Missouri, created a character program, with community participation.[232] Consensus was reached that honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and commitment should be taught. Some twenty-two school districts within St. Louis—275 schools serving 200,000 students—are involved. Each school decides how these character traits are taught, through word and action. Some schools have "friendship activities" and carefully guided discussions about "getting along with others" and about heroes in history whose lives have made a difference.[233] Over forty local foundations, businesses, and individuals formed partnership to provide funds for resources, publicity, and parent and teacher training.

Last year, in southern Delaware, Kae E. Keister, principal of Banneker Elementary School, organized a "values committee" composed of parents, teachers, school board members, and nine clergy from various faiths to see what agreement could be

reached on "time-honored understandings." The goal, according to the local school board, was to strengthen, not undermine, the role of parents and religious institutions, recognizing that the school staff—principal, teachers, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers—do teach values, implicitly, serving as role models to children.[234]

After lively conversations and public hearings, this citizen's group affirmed, unanimously, six values that, they concluded, were appropriate for all students. These were: compassion, integrity, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and self-control. Dr. Keister, in describing the process, told us: "Working with the values committee was most rewarding. We all came from many backgrounds, and to agree on core values was both exciting and affirming. And most exciting has been the way these values can be drawn into the life of the school, both in the general climate and in the curriculum. We are making a difference in the lives of children."

Banneker School reached consensus. We believe others can, too.

Basic Virtues

Every Basic School should, we believe, affirm its own *commitment to character*, seeking to define, through wide community consultation, those virtues most appropriate for students and others at their school. The lists will surely vary from one school to the next. But, as a starting point, we suggest the following seven virtues, which draw heavily on the Banneker School experience:

- *Honesty*. Each person carries out his or her responsibilities carefully and with integrity, never claiming credit for someone else's work

and being willing to acknowledge wrongdoing. Students and staff share their ideas openly, in a climate of trust, with a confidence that what is written and spoken is honestly expressed and that all people are trustworthy.

- *Respect.* Each person responds sensitively to the ideas and needs of others without dismissing or degrading them. Differences among people are celebrated and all members of the community are able to accept both praise and criticism from others. While affirming individual rights, the rights of the group are also fully honored.

- *Responsibility.* Each person has a sense of duty to fulfill willingly the tasks he or she has accepted or has been assigned. All work is conscientiously performed. Members of the community feel comfortable asking for help and agree that they must be held accountable for their behavior.

- *Compassion.* Each person is considerate and caring. There is a recognition that everyone, from time to time, feels hurt, confused, or sad. Instead of ignoring such conditions, people reach out to one another. In the case of conflict, members of the community will seek reconciliation and be understanding of each other, even forgiving.

- *Self-discipline.* Each person agrees to live within limits, not only the ones mutually agreed

upon, but, above all, those established personally. Self-discipline is exercised in relationships with others, especially in the way people speak to one another. Self-discipline also applies to the use of time. At the simplest level, self-control reflects habits of good living.

- *Perseverance*. Each person is diligent, with the inner strength and determination to pursue well-defined goals. It *does* matter that a task be completed once begun, and everyone acknowledges that to persevere not only teaches discipline, but brings rewards as well. Each person pushes hard to complete assignments, and community members support others in their work.

- *Giving*. Each person discovers that one of life's greatest satisfactions comes from kindness to others, and recognizes that talents should be shared, through service. Rather than waiting to be asked, members of the community look for opportunities to contribute positively to others, without expectation of reward.

Thus, at the end of the Basic School, students will have started to think about life's most important questions. They will have discovered that what they learn in school really does make a difference in their lives, that it will touch their deeper selves and help them become more knowledgeable, responsible human beings.

Specifically, after completion of the Basic School, students will have a sense of the sacredness of life, understanding, at a

basic level, the miracle of their own bodies and the importance of being respectful of life in all its forms. They will know that we all use symbols to relate to one another, which is a miracle in itself, and that we all have an obligation to listen carefully and communicate honestly.

Students will have discovered a simple truth: that we all respond to beauty, and that people, throughout history, have been wonderfully expressive through the arts. They will know, too, that we all are members of groups, beginning with a family, which shape our lives and which we, in turn, can shape.

All students will begin to understand just how wonderful it is that we can recall our past and anticipate the future. They will know, too, that we can look around us and place ourselves in space. Students will have learned that everyone works, which gives dignity to life, and that we all consume things. They will start to know as well the importance of not wasting the precious resources we've been given.

Basic School students will have begun to understand that we're all part of the natural world, which gives us breath and life, and that, through discipline and study, we can learn about how nature works. Finally, those who leave the Basic School will have begun to think about how, through work and service, we give meaning to our lives, how all of us want to live with purpose.

The core virtues of the Basic School are taught by both word and deed. Through the curriculum, through school climate, and through service, students are encouraged to apply the lessons of the classroom to the world around them.

We come, finally, to the question: "How can virtues be taught?" Defining virtues is one thing, but what does this mean in actual practice? Different approaches have been tried. Some schools identify character as a subject to be taught. Others give students case studies to work through and solve. After reflecting on how character might be emphasized in the elementary school, we conclude that it should be woven throughout the school experience, related to the total environment of the school.

"Children do not learn in a vacuum," says superintendent James A. Wilson of Dayton, Ohio. "We send strong messages to young people through what we say and do."[235] Thus, in the Basic School, the core virtues are taught in three ways: through the curriculum, through school climate, and through service.

CHARACTER THROUGH CURRICULUM

First, in the Basic School, virtues are included in the school curriculum. But in the Basic School, teaching virtues is not a separate course on "character" education, or an exercise in "values clarification." Rather, what we mean is discovering lessons in virtues across the whole curriculum. In Hopewell, Virginia, students study heroes and heroines in history who, by their lives, exemplify virtue. They learn from Cochise about truth and trust; from Jane Addams, friendship; from Frederick Douglass, freedom; and Thomas Edison's biography offers a wonderful example of creativity and persistence.[236]

Basic School students read great literature and talk about stories that reveal larger truths. They memorize poems that inspire them to be honest, to persevere, and to be compassionate. *The Little Match Girl*, by Hans Christian Andersen, illustrates the need for compassion. *A Tale of Three Wishes*, by Isaac Bashevis Singer, reveals how wishes must be earned. *The Emperor and the Kite*, by Jane Yolen, is a tale of courage and loyalty set in ancient China. Some schools have used *The Little Engine That Could* to stress persistence and hard work.[237] "Stories help to make sense of our lives," notes author William Kilpatrick.[238]

For young children even simple songs and verses are lessons in character. At the Waldorf School in Princeton, New Jersey, young students start each day reciting verses aimed at instilling strength and helping students develop a sense of who they are. One verse in the second-grade class goes like this:

Straight as a spear we stand,
Strength fills our legs and arms,
Warmth in our hearts,
And love for our work in the world.

During the week, the children also play their flutes together, discover the aesthetic, and learn traits of self-discipline and perseverance. They reflect on the rhythm of the seasons—the planting, the harvest, midsummer festivals—and experience the mystery and reverence our ancestors felt for the cycle of life. And they develop discipline through the diligence of work.

Rich lessons in character surely can be discovered within the Core Commonalities of the Basic School. In The Life Cycle, for example, children study health, physical education, and how the body functions. But the deeper lesson is that life is sacred, that we all must be respectful of one another. In The Use of Symbols, they learn that honesty is the key to thoughtful discourse. Exploring A Sense of Time and Space, they study heroes of the past. In learning about The Response to the Aesthetic, children are inspired by the beauty in life.

Students, during the years of the Basic School, learn discipline and persistence in the methods of science by studying Connections to Nature. In exploring Membership in Groups, students begin to understand personal rights and responsibilities. In considering Producing and Consuming, children learn the value of hard work, and the virtue of honesty. And all of these come together as students reflect on Living with Purpose, learning that, to be fully human, one must serve.

In the Basic School, the curriculum builds character.

Character Through Climate

A school's greatest impact occurs not in the formal lessons taught, but in people's lives—what's been called "the hidden

180

curriculum." The challenge of the Basic School is to create a climate in which virtues are learned, by example.

At Captain Elementary School in St. Louis, teachers, students, and parents enter into a "caring contract" that establishes clear, mutual expectations for conduct by everyone. As a result, students become more disciplined and more inclined to be helpful. Orchard School in Ridgewood, New Jersey, ends each day with children publicly thanking fellow students as well as teachers for help they've received that day, as an act of kindness.

Children also can be rewarded for their deeds. The elementary school in North Webster, Indiana, selects from among its students the "Citizen of the Week." Etna Road Elementary School in Whitehall, Ohio, announces a character "Word of the Week." Recently, "respect" was highlighted. Students learned about "respect for self" and "respect for others and their property" as the new school year opened.[239] Each day principal James Rodenmayer broadcasts a friendly reminder of the "Word of the Week," with comments about why it is so important.

One afternoon we talked with a fifth-grade teacher in a large inner-city urban school. She commented on the pressures children face and her own personal commitment to character building. She described the challenge this way: "I look around at the world my students are growing up in, the violence on the streets and on TV, and ask, 'What can I do?' I decided that I can teach them to be courteous in my class, to respect one another, to be honest with one another and me, to learn to care about each other, and respect what belongs to each other. I can refuse to have foul language in my presence, to teach them to say 'thank you' and 'excuse me.'"

It didn't take long, she said. "When swear words slipped out, students were catching themselves, saying 'I'm sorry,' or 'excuse me.' Property that had been taken was 'mysteriously' found. The classroom climate improved. Student performance improved. I felt I was teaching them not only how to learn, but how to live."

Character was being built through the climate of the classroom.

Character Through Service

Ultimately, virtues take on meaning when they are lived. "We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts," Aristotle observed.[240] We often expect a sense of service among adults. But civic duty doesn't just emerge. It begins very early, and if we want good citizenship among older people, it surely must become a part of children's lives.

We recommend, therefore, that every student in the Basic School begin learning to serve, with chores at home and school, with work on projects at the church, mosque, or synagogue, giving a helping hand to older people, children at a day-care center, and, of course, other students in the school.

In his recent book, *Greater Expectations*, William Damon elegantly states the challenge: "Even if our children were being raised to become the best informed, most artistic, and healthiest children that the world has ever seen, it would all come to nothing unless they found some things beyond themselves. . . . Even if children took their math homework and piano lessons far more seriously than they do now, they would still need to develop a sense of social responsibility.

They would still need to care for other people, to work for the good of others. . . . Otherwise they could not live together in a decent society, nor pass along what is left of the culture to their own children."[241]

"Service is a life-long commitment" is the mission statement at the Washington Elementary School in Mount Vernon, Washington. Service is woven into every aspect of the program. In grades one through three, students learn to help another person, listening carefully to others, giving compliments, and answering questions thoughtfully and with respect. In fourth grade, all students tutor a younger child. In grade five, each student has a service project outside the school, as a library helper or safety patrol leader.

Every year, each classroom at Washington Elementary School plans its own service project. One year kindergartners organized a "Trash Patrol." First-graders had a "Japanese Friendship Exchange." Second-graders made a quilt for a homeless shelter. Third-graders planted flowers for a school beautification project. Fourth-graders organized a "senior citizen" partnership. Fifth-graders started a bird sanctuary on the school grounds, for beauty as well as conservation.[242]

At Washington Elementary School, virtues are *lived*.

When all is said and done, the Basic School helps students develop the capacity to judge wisely in matters of life and conduct. The goal is not only to prepare students for careers, but also to enable them to live with dignity and purpose; not only to give knowledge to the student, but also to channel knowledge to humane ends.

Imagine what would happen if families, and places of worship, and schools—joined by television writers and radio talk show hosts, recording artists, athletes, movie stars, business executives, and politicians—all would agree to teach children, by both word and example:

- honesty,
- respect,
- responsibility,
- compassion,
- self-discipline,
- perseverance, and
- giving.

What if all of the adults, who seem so upset about the troubled lives of children, would indeed create a climate in which these core virtues would become, for all of us, a way of life?

Shortly before his death, the Jewish leader Abraham Joshua Herschel was asked what message he had for young people. He replied: "I would say: Let them remember that there is a meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every little deed counts, that every word has power, and that we can—everyone—do your share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all frustrations and all disappointments. And, above all, remember that the meaning of life is to build a life as if it were a work of art."[243]

In the end, the Basic School is about building life as if it were a work of art.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Technical Notes

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING PROJECT, 1994

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute jointly conducted an international study of primary school education. Surveys were administered in the late spring and early summer of 1994 by Gallup affiliate organizations in twelve countries, including: Chile, China, (West) Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, the United States, and Zimbabwe.

In each country, a questionnaire was administered to three populations:

- students age 9, 10, or 11 attending a primary school,
- parents of primary school children age 9, 10, or 11, and
- teachers of primary school students age 9, 10, or 11.

Approximately 500 students, 500 parents, and 350 teachers were interviewed in each country.

Separate questionnaires were developed for each of the three study groups, and, with translation, identical questionnaires were used in all countries. Many of the same questions were asked on each of the three survey instruments, so that issues may be compared not only internationally, but also across the three populations.

Questions on the survey instruments address many issues, including teachers and teaching, curriculum, the school climate, home-school connections, and social supports of education.

National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers was administered by The Wirthlin Group of McLean, Virginia. The purpose of this research effort was to record the opinions of kindergarten teachers regarding the school readiness of children who entered their classes in the fall of 1990. In August 1991, questionnaires were mailed to 20,684 kindergarten teachers in all fifty states. Responses were received from 7,141 teachers, which represents a completion rate of 34.5 percent.

A stratified random sample design was used for this survey. Teachers' names were drawn from alphabetized lists of public school kindergarten teachers employed in each state. Market Data Retrieval of Shelton, Connecticut, maintains the lists, which include the names of approximately 75 percent of all public school teachers in the United States.

Using a fixed sample size from each state does not allow for differences between states in terms of the total population of kindergarten teachers. We used a weighting scheme so that the

survey response would represent the relative numbers of teachers in the fifty states.

The short questionnaire included questions about the school readiness of children. Questions focused on the proportion of students who entered the classroom during the previous autumn not ready to participate in formal learning. Teachers were also asked how serious problems were in six specific dimensions of readiness and how school readiness has changed over time.

Many of the results from the 1991 National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers appear in the 1991 Carnegie publication *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation*, by Ernest L. Boyer.

National Survey of Elementary School Principals, 1990

The National Survey of Elementary School Principals was administered by mail in 1990. Responses were received from 560 principals.

Questions asked for information about the grade levels and enrollment of the school, the school supplies and technology available for teaching, the use of standardized testing, the services available to students, parental involvement, and school control over decision-making.

Survey of Fifth- and Eighth-Grade Students, 1988

The Survey of Fifth- and Eighth-Grade Students was administered in the fall of 1988 by The Carnegie Foundation. Questionnaires were completed by 2,750 fifth-grade students and 2,906 eighth-grade students. Students from thirty school

districts in seven states were included in the study. They were asked to respond to questions about their preferences for school subjects, about coping with personal problems, their feelings about the environments in which they live, and their participation in activities beyond the classroom.

SURVEY ON SCHOOL REFORM, 1988

The 1988 National Survey on School Reform questionnaire was mailed in the fall of 1987 to the same sample of 40,000 public school teachers as the 1987 National Survey of Public School Teachers. The focus of this survey effort was to learn how teachers perceived change in the school environment since widespread reform began in 1983. A total of 13,576 teachers returned questionnaires for an overall completion rate of 33.9 percent.

A stratified random sample design was used. Teachers' names were drawn from alphabetized lists of public school teachers employed in each state. Market Data Retrieval of Shelton, Connecticut, maintains these lists, which include the names of approximately 75 percent of all public school teachers in the United States.

Every "*n*th" name was drawn from the lists, where "*n*" was determined to achieve a total sample size of 800 teachers for each state. Because the alphabetical order of names would not be expected to have any relationship to the substance of the responses, the total sample size is composed of simple random samples from each state.

Again, using a fixed sample size from each state does not allow for differences between states in terms of the total population of teachers. We used a weighting scheme so that the survey response would represent the relative numbers of teachers in

the fifty states, and we also calculated weights to reflect the true proportion of teachers from the elementary and secondary levels.

A complete summary of the results of the 1988 National Survey on School Reform, entitled *Report Card on School Reform: The Teachers Speak*, is available from The Carnegie Foundation.

National Survey of Public School Teachers, 1987

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted the National Survey of Public School Teachers in 1987. The study was administered by The Wirthlin Group of McLean, Virginia. The purpose of this research effort was to gather data covering a wide range of topics related to the teaching profession. Questionnaires were mailed to 40,000 public elementary and secondary school teachers in all fifty states in the spring of 1987. Usable responses were received from 21,698 teachers, which represents a completion rate of 54.3 percent. The details of this survey and the 1988 Survey on School Reform are reported in the Foundation's technical report *The Condition of Teaching: A State-by-State Analysis, 1988.*

A stratified random sample design was used. Teachers' names were drawn from alphabetized lists of public school teachers employed in each state. Market Data Retrieval of Shelton, Connecticut, maintains these lists, which include the names of approximately 75 percent of all public school teachers in the United States.

Every "*n*th" name was drawn from the lists, where "*n*" was determined to achieve a total sample size of 800 teachers for each state. Because the alphabetical order of names would not

be expected to have any relationship to the substance of the responses, the total sample size is composed of simple random samples from each state.

Since a fixed sample size from each state does not allow for differences between states in terms of the total population of teachers, we developed a weighting scheme so that the survey response would represent the relative numbers of teachers in the fifty states. We calculated weights, as well, to reflect the true proportion of teachers from the elementary and secondary levels.

Survey of Kindergarten Parents, 1987

The Carnegie Foundation conducted a survey of kindergarten parents in the fall of 1987. The goal of this project was to learn more about the pre-kindergarten experience and the expectations of parents for kindergarten. Almost 2,000 parents answered questions about the preschool experience, the kindergarten curriculum, the habits of young children, and policies related to the care of young children.

A random sample design was used for this survey. The sampling frame from which the sample of school districts was drawn consisted of an alphabetized listing within each state. This data base is maintained by Market Data Retrieval.

Within the United States, an "*n*th" name was drawn from the alphabetized list, where "*n*" was determined to achieve a total sample size of 200 for the nation. Since the alphabetical order of districts is not expected to have any relationship to the substance of the responses, we can consider the sample to be essentially a simple random sample within the nation.

Of the 200 school districts selected, 133 were contacted initially. In each of these districts, a letter was sent to the superintendent and a follow-up telephone call was made one week later. For each of the schools that elected to participate, information was gathered on the number of kindergarten students they anticipated for the coming year.

After contacting a majority of the 133 districts, it was determined that we would be unable to meet our quota for 4,000 placements, because some schools had very few kindergarten students (one classroom). Therefore, 47 additional letters were sent to other school districts across the country.

On average, 60 questionnaires were sent to each school district for disbursement (107 is the most sent to any one district; 3 is the least). No school district was eliminated due to too few students.

To eliminate bias and facilitate administration of the questionnaires, every attempt was made to include entire classes within any given district. When there were more than 80 kindergarten students anticipated in the fall term within a district, a Wirthlin Group representative made a random selection among all of the classes involved. In all, 76 school districts agreed to participate in the research, and 4,251 questionnaires were sent to superintendents for disbursement.

Of the 4,251 questionnaires which were mailed to superintendents across the country for disbursement, 1,976 parents of kindergarten students returned their questionnaires, representing a completion rate of 46.5 percent. Of the 76 school districts which agreed to participate, questionnaires were returned from 73. The questionnaires were individually

numbered, edited, and key punched at The Wirthlin Group offices in Provo, Utah.

Because of the random manner in which the sample was drawn and the precision with which the classes in each district were selected, weights were not assigned to the data.

For additional information on the data presented in this report, contact The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 5 Ivy Lane, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

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17. William J. Bennett, *First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1986).

18. Cited in a speech by Pat Henry, former president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers Association, at the Children First Conference for Media, Washington, DC, 15 September 1992; reprinted in "Leading the Way: Children First," *PTA Today*, December 1992-January 1993, 4-5.

19. "The need for community is universal," said Thomas J. Sergiovanni, author of *Building Community in Schools*. "A sense of belonging, of continuity, of being connected to others and to ideas and values that make our lives meaningful and significant—these needs are shared by all of us." Thomas J. Sergiovanni, *Building Community in Schools* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1994), xiii.

20. Creating a vision is important for schools and it is seen as important for all organizations. As Peter H. Senge notes in his highly acclaimed book, *The Fifth Discipline*, "Just as personal visions are pictures or images people carry in their heads and hearts, so too are shared visions pictures that people throughout an organization carry. They create a sense of commonality that permeates the organization and gives coherence to diverse activities. . . . When people truly share a vision, they are connected, bound together by a common aspiration. . . . Shared visions derive their power from a common caring." Peter M. Senge, "Shared Vision," *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 206.

21. School visits, 1992-1995.

22. "A sense of place is an ingredient common to almost all definitions of community," states Robert V. Hine. "The group must exist in a definable space, and its geography and architecture feed its sense of belonging together. The shared knowledge that the sun in June will rise over that precise notch on the hill creates a climate of uniqueness; for no other group will the sun rise in quite that way. . . .;" Robert V. Hine, "What, Where, Why," *Community on the American Frontier: Separate But Not Alone* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, 1985), 21.

23. "Small schools encourage teachers to innovate and take ownership of the curriculum," said Michael Klonsky. "Small school size improves student outcomes on grades and test scores, attendance rates. . . . Security improves and violence decreases"; Michael Klonsky, "Small Schools: The Numbers Tell the Story," unpublished manuscript of a University of Illinois at Chicago study, Small Schools Workshop, College of Education, December 1994, 2; see also Marvin Martin, "Schools Offer a New Perspective: In Alternative Program, Less Equals More for Pupils," *Chicago*

Tribune, Education Today supplement, 20 November 1994, 17.

24. Winifred Gallagher, *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993), 159.

25. A report from the University of Chicago noted that recent reform efforts in Chicago schools worked best in smaller schools. "Small schools have been shown to be conducive to better relationships and communication among the students, teachers, principals, and parents," according to Anthony Bryk, who headed the study. "A smaller administrative unit facilitates the establishment of a strong school community"; Anthony Bryk, *A View from the Elementary Schools: The State of Reform in Chicago*; A Report on the Steering Committee Consortium on Chicago School Research, July 1993.

    Also, Dirk Johnson, "Study Says Small Schools are Key to Learning," *The New York Times*, 21 September 1994, Section B, 12; citing *The Report Card on American Education*, American Legislative Exchange Council.

26. This is in keeping with the recommendations of elementary school principals. Responding to a national survey, 47 percent of the elementary principals said they considered three hundred to five hundred students the ideal number for the Basic School, and 38 percent suggested the school have fewer than three hundred; The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Survey on the Basic School Concept, 1990.

27. Thomas J. Sergiovanni, *Leadership for the School House: How Is It Different? Why Is It Important?* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1995), 70.

28. "Small elementary schools show reasonably consistent and positive learning effects," notes researcher Herbert Walberg in a recent study of the research. "Perhaps the

main reason is that the main agents of learning, teachers, and students, undistracted by departmentalization and hierarchy, can concentrate on substance. Parents, too, are more likely to know the principal and teachers, be informed about their children's progress, participate more fully in school activities, and influence decision making"; Herbert J. Walberg and Herbert J. Walberg III, "Losing Local Control," *Educational Researchers*, June/July 1994, vol. 23, no. 5, 19-26; in *Network News and Views*, Educational Excellence Network, August 1994, 23-30.

29. Mary Erina Driscoll, "The Foundation of Community in Public Schools: Findings and Hypotheses," *Administrator's Notebook*, vol. xxxiv, no. 4, 1990.

30. Ernest L. Boyer, *Teachers' Voices*, unpublished manuscript, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

31. Paul T. Hill, Gail E. Foster, Tamar Gendlar, *High Schools with Character* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1990).

32. Ernest L. Boyer, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1983); from "What Every Student Should Learn, Chapter 6, Literacy: The Essential Tool," 95; in Wayne Booth, "Mere Rhetoric, and the Search for Common Learning," in *Common Learning* (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1981), 34.

33. In their study, *Failing at Fairness*, Myra and David Sadker argue that in elementary classrooms today girls receive "hidden lessons." They are called on less often, receive less attention, praise, and help from teachers—which directly impacts student achievement; Myra Sadker and David Sadker in *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), ix and 1-4.

34. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994, (United States).

35. What's so disturbing is that concerns about discipline are increasing, even in the lower grades. For six years in a row, parents have stated in polls that discipline is the biggest problem facing public schools; Stanley M. Elam, Lowell C. Rose, and Alec M. Gallup, "The 26th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," 1989-1994, *Phi Delta Kappa*, September 1994, 43-45.

36. Diane Radecki, "Cartoon Report," The National Coalition on Television Violence, Champaign, Illinois, April 1991; in Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991), 80.

37. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994, (United States).

38. Further, a recent survey found that the large majority of Americans, in all parts of the country and across every demographic category, say their local public schools are not providing a safe, orderly environment, the basic underpinning for a sound education; Jean Johnson and John Immerwahr, *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools*, Public Agenda, 5 October 1994, 10.

39. Paul T. Hill, Gail E. Foster, and Tamar Gendlar, *High Schools With Character* (Santa Monica, California: The RAND Corporation, 1990).

40. Richard L. Curwin and Allen N. Hendler spell out how a social contract might work in *Discipline with Dignity*,

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1988, 47-64.

41. Jean Seligmann, "How Parents Can Talk to Their Kids," *Newsweek*, 10 January 1994, 50.

42. School visit, October 1993.

43. Mary E. Clark, "Meaningful Social Bonding as a Universal Human Need," in John Burton, ed., *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 44.

44. It is sad, but true, that many of our children today are lonely. They are less connected to the adult world than in the past, and spend less time with the previous generations. One study by a University of Maryland sociologist found that parents spent 17 hours per week with their children, compared to 30 hours n 1965. Amitai Etzioni, "Children of the Universe," *Utne Reader*, May/June 1993, 57; from Amitai Etzioni *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1993).

    Another study, by Victor Fuchs, a Stanford University economist, found that the time parents have available to children fell appreciably between 1960 to 1986—10 hours less per week; Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "The New Family Values," *Utne Reader*, May/June 1993, 63; in *When the Bough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children*, Sylvia Ann Hewlett (New York: Basic Books/HarperCollins, 1991).

45. Figures from The Children's Defense Fund and the Child Welfare League, 1994.

46. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

47. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

48. "Technos Interview with James P. Comer, M.D.," *Technos*, vol. 1, no. 4., Winter, 1992, 4-5.

49. "NASSP, Community of Caring Initiate Partnership to Teach Student Values," press release, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 3 February 1995, 1.

50. In their study of communities, authors Carolyn R. Shaffer and Kristen Amundsen have found that "celebrations play a central role in building and sustaining community;" Carolyn R. Shaffer and Kristen Amundsen, *Creating Community Anywhere: Finding Support and Connection in a Fragmented World* (Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books, 1993), 305-308.

51. Personal communication, October 1994.

52. In analyzing what made two hundred and twelve successful elementary schools work, Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia made this conclusion: ". . . effective leadership is central to a school's success. While a school's leadership stems essentially from the principal, other professionals in the school also can provide strong leadership, depending on the principal's delegation skills. While the importance of leadership is clear, individual leadership styles vary markedly from one school to another, with the style arising within the context of the particular school. What most characterizes effective school leaders is their ability to set and maintain clear direction for the school while facilitating the work of the staff;" Bruce L. Wilson and Thomas B. Corcoran, "A Look at 212 Successful Schools," *Streamlined Seminar*, National Association of Elementary School Principals, September 1988, vol. 7, no. 1, 2.

53. Remarks for the Harold McGraw, Jr., Prize in Education awards program, Washington, DC, 19 October 1994; also see Harold Howe II, *Thinking About Our Kids: An Agenda for American Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 130.

54. As Evelyn Hunt Ogden, deputy superintendent of East Brunswick in New Jersey, notes: "While the teacher is the person who establishes the climate for the classroom, it is the principal who is the force that sets the tone and provides the drive, who clarifies the belief system of the school, who models the values, and who reinforces the staff who seek to improve instruction. Best School principals really believe that 'we can get it right in this school, for every kid'." Evelyn Hunt Ogden and Vito Germinario, *The Nation's Best Schools* (Technomic Publishing Co., Inc., 1994), 10.

55. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 1987.

56. Personal communication, August 1994.

57. In fact, in a recent poll conducted by Louis Harris, teachers said that school-based management and shared decision-making were key to reform. Eight in ten teachers believe that school-based management/shared decision-making reform can bring a whole host of benefits—including having more discretion on what to teach in class and how to teach it; Louis Harris, "Teachers Say School Reforms Making Only Partial Impact; Seek Broader Role in Effort," 23 September 1993, 1-3; and in remarks of Louis Harris, "Ford Foundation Study," National Press Club, Washington, DC, 23 September 1993, 1-4.

58. Elementary schools "feel cut off from a sense of professionalism by their perceived lack of autonomy," according to a California report. In too many school districts, decisions that directly affect what takes place in the classroom—which topics will be taught, which

textbooks will be used, how classes will be scheduled, and how a teacher's performance will be measured—are made elsewhere"; *It's Elementary!: Elementary Graces Task Force Report*, The California Alliance of Elementary Schools (The California Department of Education, 1992), 53.

59. Michael W. Kirst, "The Future for Local School Boards," *Education Digest*, March 1994, 38; reprinted from *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75 (January 1994), 378-81.

60. The business group, the Committee for Economic Development, in fact, has argued that schools are actually ailing from an overload of mandates imposed on them and suggests that schools have more authority over funding, curriculum, teaching, and hiring or firing while meeting specified achievement goals. "Putting Learning First: Governing and Managing the Schools for High Achievement," The Committee for Economic Development, New York, New York, September 1994.

61. Office for Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, *Who's in Charge? Teachers' Views on Control Over School Policy and Classroom Practices*, August 1994.

62. John I. Goodlad, "Schooling: Issues and Answers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, special magazine section: "Ideals in Transition: Tomorrow's America," 25 March 1979, 72.

63. "Effective teaching is complicated and difficult," said Fred M. Newmann at the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. "It usually requires information, expertise, and support far beyond the resources available to the individual teacher working alone in an isolated classroom. Teachers who collaborate with their colleagues are more likely to be effective with students, because they will benefit from expanded resources." Fred M. Newmann, "School-Wide Professional Community," *Issues in Restructuring Schools*, Center on Organization and

Restructuring of Schools, Issue Report No. 6, Spring 1994, 1.

64. Personal communication, September 1993.

65. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994, (United States).

66. Indeed, this lack of time may be one of the chief reasons our elementary schools have failed to emerge as institutions ready for the twenty-first century. A recent report from the RAND Corporation called "Time for Reform" suggests that school reformers have not paid enough serious attention to providing school personnel with the time needed to plan, implement new programs, and refine old approaches. Teachers do not have time to attend workshops, practice new teaching methods, or receive feedback," researchers found. Paul Hill, *Time for Reform* (Santa Monica, California: The RAND Corporation, 1992); see also "To Carry Out Reform Activities Give Teachers Released Time, Compensate Them for Own Time," *Emerging R&D Outcomes*, Wisconsin Center for Effective Schools, 7; in *Finding Time for School Reform: Obstacles and Answers* by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

    Another study of Japanese teachers found that elementary teachers there are provided a longer school year, more time in the school day—as much as half the day—in which to prepare for daily lessons, share ideas with one another, and design curriculum; American Federation of Teachers, 1993, *How U.S. Teachers Measure Up Internationally, A Comparative Study of Teacher Pay, Training, and Conditions of Service*, 37.

67. American Federation of Teachers, *How U.S. Teachers Measure Up Internationally, A Comparative Study of Teacher Pay, Training, and Conditions of Service*, 1993, 37.

68. Annette Licitra, "RAND Report Explores Ways to Free Time for School Reform," *Education Daily*, 9 December 1992, 1, 5; see also Meg Sommerfield, "More Planning Time Urged for Front-Line School Reformers," *Education Week*, 9 December 1992, 8; both citing Susanna Purnett and Paul Hill, *Time for Reform* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1992).

69. A recent study of Kentucky schools found that teachers aren't even given adequate time to make the changes mandated by the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act. In the attempt to implement ungraded classrooms (just one of the reforms), kindergarten through third-grade teachers spent 305 hours of their own time during the school year, while the school districts provided only ten hours of release time for professional development and planning; "To Carry Out Reform Activities Give Teachers Released Time, Compensate Them for Own Time," *Emerging R&D Outcomes*, 1993, 7; in *Finding Time for School Reform: Obstacles and Answers* (Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1993).

70. Gene I. Maeroff, *The Empowerment of Teachers: Overcoming the Crisis of Confidence* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), 26.

71. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994; questionnaires were administered to students, parents, and teachers in twelve nations including Chile, China, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, United States, and Zimbabwe.

72. A 1990 survey on the concept of the Basic School, conducted by the National Association for Elementary School Principals, found that 48 percent of principals surveyed believed that the teacher's day should be lengthened to include time for training and planning. Sixty-six percent said that involving teachers in planning and design of the curriculum and operation of

the school would help teachers be most effective. Many principals suggested adding two weeks to the year for teachers to plan and train.

73. Based on school visits; for more examples, see also "Professional Development: Changing Times," *Policy Briefs*, Report 4, 1994 (Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory); also see Mary Anne Raywid, "Finding Time for Collaboration," *Educational Leadership*, September 1993, 30-34.

74. Personal communication, Patricia Bolaños, May 1994.

75. Personal communication at Blue Ribbon Schools ceremony, Washington, DC, September 1993.

76. Speech at a meeting on the New Standards Project, Chicago, Illinois, May 1993.

77. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

78. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

79. John I. Goodlad, "A Study of Schooling: Some Implications for School Improvement," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April 1983, 557.

80. Basic School teachers are grounded in the highest standards of working with young children—they promote social development and skills and develop the physical dimensions of the young child as well. For more information on standards for working with young children see "Integrated Components of Appropriate and Inappropriate Practice in the Primary Grades" by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

81. Taken from the American Teacher Awards, sponsored by The Walt Disney Company, The Disney Channel, Burbank, California.

82. Linda Darling-Hammond, "Will 21st-Century Schools Really Be Different?" *Education Digest*, September 1994, 4; in *Virginia Journal of Education*, 87 (March 1994), 6-13.

83. American school districts spend, on average, less than 0.5 percent of their funds on staff development, compared with up to 10 percent of school expenditures in other countries, according to a recent report on the status of teaching in the United States, Linda Darling-Hammond, "The Current Status of Teaching and Teacher Development in the United States," background paper prepared for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future," November 1994, 15.

84. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup international Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

85. "Professional Practice School Program," Exxon Annual Report, 1994, 25-27.

86. The Walt Disney Company and The Disney Channel news release on The American Teacher Awards, 1991; and personal communication, 27 March 1995.

87. School visit, 14 September 1994.

88. Samuel G. Sava, "Post Script: On Slowing Down," *Principal*, vol. 73, no. 5, May 1994, 64.

89. "Teachers Give Parents' Role Highest Priority, MetLife Says," *Education Daily*, 11 May 1993, 1; also see "The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher 1993," Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

90. "1993 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1993, 149.

91. Study after study links parent involvement to the reading achievement of youngsters and to increased test scores in math. But researchers have also found that involving parents in their children's schooling has a positive impact on a child's behavior and attitudes about school. *Value Search: Parent Involvement in the Education Process: A Collection of ERIC Materials Selected for Relevance*, (Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1993).

92. Richard W. Riley, "State of American Education," remarks at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 15 February 1994.

93. Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation*, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 8.

94. *Strong Families, Strong Schools*, U.S. Department of Education, September 1994, 9.

95. Kenneth Keniston and the Carnegie Council on Children, *All Our Children: The American Family Under Pressure* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1977), 18.

96. Also see, Terrel H. Bell, "Reflections One Decade After A Nation at Risk," *Phi Delta Kappan* (April 1993), 592-597.

97. Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991), 7.

98. Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991), 7-8.

99. Personal communication, 7 February 1995; see also "Snapshot: Cradle School at Byck Elementary," *Instructor Magazine* (March 1990), 54.

100. Personal communication, 7 February 1995; see also "Snapshot: Cradle School at Byck Elementary," *Instructor Magazine*, March 1990, 54.

101. Personal communication, 7 February 1995; see also "Cradle School at Byck Elementary," *Instructor Magazine*, March 1990, 54.

102. Apelman Elementary School is a pseudonym for one of the initial twenty schools that participated in one part of the Carnegie Early Years Project.

103. Merry White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge: A Commitment to Children* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 111.

104. Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991), 73.

105. Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991), 73.

106. Ernest L. Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991), 73-74.

107. Personal communication with Cleveland Teachers Union, 3 February 1995 and Michael Charney; see also Michael Charney, Parental Involvement in Cleveland, *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 1993), 5.

108. "Transition to Kindergarten in American Schools," RMC Research Corp. (Washington, DC: Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Department of Education, 1992); in "Report Says Few Schools Promote

Preschool-to-School Transition," *Report on Preschool Programs*, 6 May 1992, 91.

109. The Student Inventory we suggest is based on our analysis of parent entry forms and parent enrollment forms in thirty-five randomly selected elementary schools in ten states throughout the country. We discovered that most merely asked for basic health statistics and the only real national form was the computerized form formerly used by the federally-funded national Migrant Student Record Transfer System, that was based in Arkansas, and tracked the two million school children migrating seasonally across the United States.

110. Kevin Duchschere, "Kids, parents, school officials all cross their hearts at rally," *Star Tribune*, 21 January 1994; and "News Release" from the Minneapolis Public Schools.

111. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

112. Nomination forms, 1993-94 Elementary Blue Ribbon Schools Program, sponsored by U.S. Department of Education, and personal communication, February 1994.

113. "Family Centers Provide Places in Schools Where Parents Meet, Plan, and Implement Programs," *R&D Outcomes*, Fall 1994, 8; citing *Parent/Family Centers: Dimensions of Functioning 28 Schools in 14 States*, the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University, 1994).

114. Personal communication, State Farm Insurance Company, 3 February 1995.

115. "New Law Allows Working Parents to Take Time Off to Help in Their Children's Schools," news release, California Department of Education, 3 February 1995.

116. "Getting Involved: One Parent's Story," *Southern Education Foundation News*, Southern Education Foundation, (February 1993), vol. 7, no. 1, 8.

117. "Improving Learning: Richmond School Involves Whole Community in Change," *Southern Education Fund, Inc.*, February 1993, vol. 7, no. 1, 7.

118. Keith Geiger, "A Shared Responsibility," advertisement, *Education Week*, 16 February 1994, 15.

119. Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 17.

120. Quoted by Frank Press, President, National Academy of Sciences, to the Annual Meeting of Phi Beta Kappa Associates, 25 October 1986.

121. Pam Belluck, "At 15, Westinghouse Finalist Grasps 'Holy Grail' of Math," *The New York Times*, 25 January 1995, A1.

122. The effective teaching of such basics, from the public's point of view, is not a trivial or inconsequential goal, according to a recent national survey. The public believes it is the foundation on which children build their futures. Sixty percent of Americans say that "not enough emphasis on the basics such as reading, writing, and math is a serious problem in their local schools." At the same time, this finding does not imply that the teaching of such "basics" is at the exclusion of other, more challenging work or the development of higher order skills. Rather, it is an argument for putting "first things first," and ensuring that all children have a command of language in its widest sense; Jean Johnson and John Immerwahr, *First Things First: What*

Americans Expect from the Public Schools, Public Agenda, 5 October 1994, 13-14.

123. The American Council for the Arts found that 91 percent of Americans say it is important for children to learn about the arts and develop artistic skills in schools; "Americans Believe Arts Are Essential Part of Education," *Americans and the Arts VI*, survey by Louis Harris for the American Council for the Arts, 19 March 1992, 1-2.

124. Adapted from *Human Development: From Conception Through Adolescence* by Kurt W. Fischer and Arlyne Lezrson (New York: W.R. Freeman and Company, 1984), 365.

125. Genevieve Clapp, *Child Study Research: Current Perspectives and Applications* (Teachers College Press, 1986), 143-54.

126. Lillian R. Putnam, "Reading Instruction: What Do We Know Now That We Didn't Know Thirty Years Ago?" *Language Arts*, Vol. 71, September 1994, 363.

127. Estimates vary on the number of elementary teachers using the whole language approach. A recent survey by the U.S. Department of Education reported that over 40 percent of schools now use whole language approaches. A recent article in *Atlantic Monthly* argued that the whole-language method is used by one-fifth of all teachers of reading, "with an even larger proportion adapting elements of it, such as the greater use of authentic children's literature and the decreased use of intensive phonics." And some form of whole-language ideology has been adopted by more than a dozen state education agencies. Art Levin, "The Great Debate Revisited," *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1994, 38-44.

128. New Zealand Department of Education, *Reading in Junior Classes* (Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Education 1985), 9.

129. Unfortunately, we have a long way to go to meet such standards. A recent report on student writing found that many American children have serious difficulty producing effective informative, persuasive, or narrative writing. The problem, researchers found, is that students simply do not spend enough time in school writing; "Writing Report Card," 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics, 7 June 1994.

130. "Writing Report Card," 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics, 7 June 1994.

131. Fred Hechinger, "About Education: The Joy of Teaching Writing," *The New York Times*, 3 December 1985, Section C, 16; also see Lucy McCormick Calkins, *Lessons from a Child: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing* (Exeter, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 153, 156-8.

132. Standard English, in fact, is now the official language in nineteen states; "Why a Hispanic Heads an American Organization Called U.S. English," advertisement, *Time*, 23 March 1994.

English is used as the second officially-recognized language in 44 countries with a combined population of 1.6 billion people, one-third of the world's inhabitants. More than two-thirds of all scientific papers are published in English, two-thirds of business deals in Europe are conducted in English, 70 percent of the world's mail is sent in envelopes addressed in English. According to Bill Bryson, author of highly-acclaimed book, *The Mother Tongue*, there are more students of English in China than there are people in the United States; Bill Bryson, *The Mother Tongue: English and How It Goes That Way* (New York: William Morrow, 1990).

133. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

134. Although California and Texas have the largest population of new immigrants, Eugene Garcia of the U.S. Department of Education notes that the demographics are changing across the country. "The demographic realities suggest that now, 5 percent to 10 percent of the students coming into schools do not speak English," says Garcia. "If you look down the road, we would expect 2025 to be the magical year, when the majority of students will come from backgrounds not speaking English." Jo Anna Natale, "Homeroom to the World," *The Executive Educator*, January 1994, 15.

135. Ernest L. Boyer, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers), 100; unpublished data for Population Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C.

136. Recent research in linguistics has found that people really do have a window of opportunity for learning foreign languages that peaks during the ages 10-13, according to Lourdes Mallis, language professor at Keene State University in New Hampshire. This is the time when children are most often able to make new connections within their brain. Their tongue is still in an agile state for the formation of sounds, particularly sounds they have heard—the click of the tongue in African languages, the trill of the R in Spanish. After this age, it is increasingly difficult to learn a foreign language, as many adult Americans have learned the hard way.

In addition, "other researchers note the best time to teach students cultural studies is between the ages of 7 and 12, when children are less egocentric and can view themselves as part of a larger world," notes Susan Black in "Research Report: Learning Languages," *The Executive Educator*, March 1993, 34.

137. "First-Ever AMOCO Partner Award to Honor University of Chicago School Mathematics Project," Press release, 28 July 1993, 3.

138. In math, as in reading, we now know a lot more about how children learn. "Preschoolers are sophisticated about numbers and have learned more math than many parents or teachers realize," states John T. Bruer, president of the James S. McDonnell Foundation in St. Louis which supports scientific and biomedical research and research in education. "By age 3, most children can count small sets of visible objects, and by age 4 or 5 they can correct the counting mistakes others make. Most 5-year-olds have also learned to compare two numbers for size."

As a result, Mr. Bruer argues that the elementary arithmetic curricula must build on and extend children's informal, preschool understanding of numbers. This includes reaching "number sense" to kindergartners and first-graders and then number sequence, the principles underlying counting, how to compare numbers and through the use of manipulatives—concrete objects such as poker chips, dice, thermometers, and board games. And in studies, researchers have found that knowing the "sense" behind the numbers increases student achievement in math.

139. "Teaching for Understanding," *The Mathematics Model Curriculum Guide, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* (California State Department of Education, 1987), 12.

140. Recently, the National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that as many as two-thirds of our students, including our fourth-graders, are performing poorly on mathematics questions that require them to take time to reason and explain their answers. Only 16 percent of fourth-graders could answer mathematics questions requiring problem-solving skills. Only 23 percent of fourth-graders could explain who ate the greater portion of a pizza, even with the use of pictures!

141. David Baumann, "NRC Turns Up Volume on Math Crisis," *Education Daily*, 11 April 1990, 2.

142. "Teaching for Understanding," *The Mathematics Model Curriculum Guide, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* (California State Department of Education, 1987), 12.

143. Patte Barth and Ruth Mitchell, *Smart Start: Elementary Education for the 21st Century*, sponsored by The Council for Basic Education (Golden, Colorado: North American Press, 1992), 60.

144. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the George H. Gallup International Institute, The International Schooling Project, 1994.

145. Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

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